The Disclosure of Being

A Study of Yogic and Tantric Methods of Enstasy

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Both Yoga and Tantricism have their own eschatologies in terms of which transcendence of human finitude is endeavoured to be actualised. To achieve this soteriological goal, both the systems have discovered, in their own respective ways, such theoretical responses and practical methods by the application of which soteric goal can be appropriated. It is because of this feature that both may be said to be soteriological systems of thought and practice.

This book attempts to study Yoga and Tantra from both historical and theoretical perspectives. An effort has been made to trace the historical roots of both Yoga and Tantra, and how, with the passage of time, each system developed in the context of prevailing situations. The analytical interpretation of some of the major themes that Yoga and Tantricism tackle in the context of suffering in the world greatly enhances the value of the work and will be of great interest to students of religion.

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Moti Lal Pandit, trained as a theologian and linguist, has been communicator of Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. His many books include: *Towards Transcendence; Being as Becoming; Transcendence and Negation; Beyond the Word; Trika Śaivism of Kashmir; Śūnyatā: The Essence of Mahāyāna Spirituality; Buddhism: A Religion of Salvation;* and *Encounter with Buddhism.*

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Munshiram Manoharlal
Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

ISBN 81-215-1172-0
First published 2006

Typeset, printed and published by
Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
Post Box 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055.

Dedicated to
my friend
Magnar Helgheim

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Introduction

The Vedic View of Life

THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS as well as structure of Indian philosophy or of spirituality has to be analysed and viewed in relation to the vision or ultimate goal it has of human destiny. The earliest vision of Indian spirituality is not so much concerned with the intangible and abstract questions of existence as much as with the practical needs of life in the world. The early Aryans, upon their settlement in the Gangetic plains of India, were confronted with such practical problems of life as to how to make their newly-acquired land as their own, as to how to confront the hostilities from the indigenous tribes, and so on and so forth. From the Vedas itself we gain sufficient evidence that the early Aryans were much more desirous of leading a long and healthy life, of having a good progeny, of getting a good produce from their land, than with questions of what happens to life upon death, or what is the nature of existence, or how the world has come into being. This pragmatic contextual view would mean that the text of life had to be so formulated as would prove to be practical in running the day-to-day affairs of life.

This practical contextuality would mean that the religiosity of the Aryans had to express itself through such mediums of expression that were so tangible as could be perceived as well as experienced. One of the ways of giving expression to the tangibility of experience was the way they encountered Nature in their day-to-day life. Rain, thunder, storm, etc., are experienced daily by each and everyone in terms of their effect. If the effects of phenomenal events were wholesome, the

causes of these effects would be so personified as would result in imputing all auspicious qualities upon them. Likewise would malevolent attributes be imputed upon such causes that gave rise to inauspicious effects. Thus the personified forces of Nature would be viewed either as being benevolent or hostile. It is these personified forces that would be seen as directly impinging upon the course of one's life. In conceiving relationship with Nature in terms of correspondence, so a practical devise had to be discovered whereby these natural forces could be used for achieving the practical ends (*puruṣārtha*) of life in terms of health, wealth, progeny, and so on.

This down-to-earth vision of life demanded a kind of religiosity that would be practical, tangible, and would also be seen as a means of appeasing the personified forces. It is, thus, this view of life that led to the emergence of a religiosity that would be through and through sacrifice-oriented. The early Aryans thought of sacrifice as the best way of realising the day-to-day goals of life. The aim of sacrifice was to gain access to the manifest natural forces that had direct impact upon the life-situation of each individual. It is this pragmatic, sacrifice-centered religiosity that permeates the general ethos of what we call Vedism.

Sacrifice versus Asceticism

With the change of time, however, the outlook of Aryans also underwent drastic evolutionary changes. One of the ways in terms of which this evolutionary change reflected itself was to find out as to how to make sacrifice as an effective tool of appeasing the personified forces of Nature, that is, the divinities. As the presence of these divinities was experienced at every moment of life, so they could be seen in terms of their immanent presence within the phenomenon. This presence of divinities within the phenomenon resulted in the conception of the Cosmic Power of Nature, and such a philosophical conception played a major role in the transformation of the religious outlook of the Aryans. This idea of Cosmic Power as presence reflected itself particularly in two important areas, namely, in the area of language and of asceticism. A belief arose that it is language that not only is the source of

knowledge, but also contains within itself such powers whereby the divine powers within and without could be invoked. It is this view of language that led to the belief that a certain set or series of words contain cosmic energy, which, upon their utterance, make the sacrifical offerings unto the divinities causally efficacious, and the efficacy of offerings would mean the appeasement of divinities. It is this view of language that led to the formulation of a code language, which commonly has come to be known as *mantra*. Language, in the form of mantra or sacred formula, would, in the post-Vedic age, play a major role in such esoteric schools that are allied to Tantricism.

As to how to make mantra an effective tool of causal efficacy was one of the major questions that the Vedic Aryans confronted. The solution to this question was found in the discovery of asceticism or what we call spiritual ardour (*tapas*). The practice of spiritual ardour was seen to be such a tool whereby the ascetic (*muni*) could not only gain control over one's mental and sense faculties, but also could attain such occult powers that enabled him to transcend such cosmic forces that have a direct impact upon our lives. It is this conception of asceticism that would, in the hands of wandering ascetics (*śramaṇa*), become an essential tool for the ascetical theology of renunciation. Mahāvīra and Buddha would further it by incorporating it as the basis for their monasticism. For the yogic ideology asceticism would be seen as the best method of withdrawal from the world as well as the most effective means of effecting introversion, or what we may call inwardness, of consciousness. This causal efficacy as a means of gaining occult powers is already foreshadowed in the *Ṛgveda* when the ascetic is made to say: ". . . we are mounted on the winds. You, mortals, can perceive only our body."[1] This wonder that is expressed at the attainment of occult powers not only differentiates an ascetic from ordinary mortals, but also bestows upon him such divine powers due to which he can become the master of the rising and the setting sun.[2]

It is the ideology of spiritual ardour that would become the foundation for most of the spiritual traditions of India, whether Brāhmaṇic or Śramanic. For both Brāhmaṇic and

Śramaṇic traditions asceticism would represent the principle of renunciation (*vairāgya, tyāga*) in general and the monastic withdrawal (*saṃnyāsa*) in particular. For the yogic tradition it would be seen as the most effective tool of turning consciousness inwards, and thereby enabling the senses and the mind to delink itself from all the externals that trouble it. Still for other traditions it would not denote so much as withdrawal from the world as much as of gaining access to those hidden powers that are latent or hidden within and without. It is this latter conception of asceticism that is much more prevalent among the general masses, and the roots of it are to be found in the general outlook of the Vedas itself. The term *tapas,* in the Vedic context, expresses the result of ascetical practices in terms of the internal spiritual ardour or heat. In the *Ṛgveda*[3] the word *tapas,* as a concept of generative or creative power, is used both at the cosmic and spiritual levels. It is through ascetical exercises, whether physical or mental, that the ascetic gains such occult powers as that of clairvoyance as well as that of entrance into the abode of divine beings. Prajāpati, the Primal Man, gives rise to the cosmos due to the occult powers that he has obtained through the generation of internal ascetical heat.

It is the innate power of asceticism that makes both sacrifice and mantra effective instruments for approprianting the cosmic forces of Nature. The ascetic ideology, in the later Vedic period, becomes so dominant that the sacrifice itself is seen to be the embodiment of asceticism. As an ascetical mode of offering, sacrifice, slowly but steadily, is internalised to the degree that consciousness is effectively turned inward. It is not the external offering that is what counts, but it is as to how effectively we are able to make internal offering as a mode of appeasement to the divinities within. Asceticism as an instrument of internalisation of consciousness or of inward offering is facilitated by the power of mantra. These two instruments would become the handmaidens for such Tantric traditions that would lay emphasis upon the yogic methods of meditation. Upon the internalisation of sacrifice, the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) thereby is enabled to appropriate and assimilate both the sacrifice and the offering in terms of

ascetical praxis. Through this assimilation the sacrificer gains the rank of a divinity.[4] By interiorising sacrifice, the physiological functions of the body are symbolically identified with the sacrificial libation.[5] Since it is asceticism that opens up the door to interiority, so it is seen as a substitute for sacrifice itself.

This understanding of asceticism as a substitute for sacrifice is in the Upaniṣads developed further in terms of looking at it as one of the most auspicious means of actualising inner purity. It is through ascetical means that the inner, or what we call mental, impurities are removed. The impurities within function as veils that obstruct the clarity of vision, and as a result of which we are disabled to recognise who we really are. On account of non-recognition of who we are, or what our essential nature is, we thereby are subjected to experiences that are painful. Thus the removal of impurities is seen as a *sine qua non* for the attainment of knowledge that produces the necessary awareness concerning who we essentially are. It is, therefore, through inner purification that the knowledge that is hidden is unveiled. Thus there is a clear shift from the appropriation of the fruit of sacrifice to the attainment of inner illuminative knowledge. This shift from the Vedic pragmatism to the Upaniṣadic theoria basically stems from the human inquisitiveness itself. Mere material wellbeing, which was mainly the aim of Vedic pragmatism, could not last for long, because human mind is never satisfied unless it probes the very *raison d'être* of life itself. In the Upaniṣads, thus, it is the metaphysical urge to know more as to who we are that bursts forth spontaneously. The questions that are now asked are not in terms of physical wellbeing of life in the world; rather they are asked in terms as to who we are and what is the final destiny, if it has any, of life itself. The text of the problem is now seen in the context of such existential situations that determine the conditions of life in the world. The question that now is asked is: What are the underlying forces or principles that are responsible in situating a specific kind of content of life of each existent in the world? This question of finding out the determinative forces of life in the world arose on finding out that life as it is lived or experienced in the

world is not satisfactory or satisfying one. Since dissatisfaction, in one form or the other, is experienced always and everywhere in the world, so there must necessarily be a different mode of life that is beyond the conditioning world of dissatisfaction. Thus the text of the religious search or of vision is directed towards such a mode of life that is totally free from conditioning world of space and time. It is the search for the unconditioned that has pre-occupied the Indian mind ever since the time of the Upaniṣads.

The Search for the Unconditioned

This new existential concern of the Upaniṣads for the unconditioned gave rise to certain general metaphysical lines of thought or principles. Prior to the Upaniṣads the Śramaṇic spirituality had already discovered the phenomenal world of space and time, of matter as a process, a flux or becoming. The world that is perceived by the senses as being static or stationed, and thereby permanent, is actually undergoing constant change in terms of emergence and dissolution, birth and death. This constant and continuous fluxional process of becoming of the perceived means that nothing in the world or of the world is lasting, which means that the sensibles that are perceived as being solid or unchangeable are basically impermanent. This conclusion is arrived at on the basis of the axiom that says: That which undergoes constant change cannot at all be termed as being permanent. It is this revolutionary Śramaṇic insight concerning the nature of the sensible objects as being characterised by change that the Upaniṣads had no hesitation of making it as the basis for their further metaphysical inquiry.

The Śramaṇas, upon making this revolutionary discovery, did not think it necessary to find out as to whether there is such a substratum, in the midst of this change, that could be termed as the unchangeable or the unconditioned. The Upaniṣads did not bring, like their Śramaṇic counterparts, to halt their metaphysical inquiry. They reasoned that the phenomenal world, no doubt, is characterised by change, and thereby by impermanence, but this does not mean that the principle of permanence does not exist or cannot be discovered.

They further reasoned that there must be a principle or law in terms of which the world as becoming-process can be explained and interpreted, and this law is nothing else but karman or that causal force that really actualises the individual becoming in terms of birth and death. It is this law of causality that allows becoming to continue in terms of process. Insofar as the karman-causality operates, the process of becoming, both at the cosmic and individual levels, will continue to operate. Man, as a temporal existent, comes into being because of karman. Insofar as he remains subject to karman, man will continue to suffer the pain of becoming in terms of countless deaths and births. This means that man, as a creature of space and time, is bound to experience the limitations of finitude, of non-being, of creaturehood, and so on. It also means that, as an embodied existent, he has to suffer the pain that psychosomatic form of life carries with itself. This entire drama of process, of endless becoming, of continuous birth and death of beings in the world is called *saṃsāra.*

Reason as well as experience tells that nothing exists by itself or is the cause of its own existence. That which has been caused has rightly been spoken of as being contingent (*paratantra*). This means that the world as a caused entity, even though it may be a fluxional one, cannot exist or subsist in itself or by itself. There has to be a substratum or an underlying principle upon which this drama of change is being played or enacted or initiated. Change of anything cannot occur in a vacuum nor can anything exit, even though it may be a momentary one, unless it has a basis or substratum (*adhiṣṭhāna*) that is permanent and nonchanging. Since the underlying principle cannot have the same characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*) that pertain to entities that are subject to change, so it has to be transcendent, which means that it has to be free from the characteristics of the conditioned. And this underlying unchanging and unconditioned principle, according to the Upaniṣads, is nothing else than what has come to be known as *brahman-ātman.*

Since what constitutes phenomenon is understood as consisting of change and finitude, so it must, according to the Upaniṣads, be termed as unreal (*asat*). The real, in contrast to

the unreal, has to be permanent, unchanging and substantial. If the world is unreal, does it mean that it is non-existent like the horns of a hare or like the barren woman's son? The Upaniṣads are not inclined to this viewpoint. The world as unreal is real to the extent it is perceived as real. It turns out to be unreal only upon knowing it to be unreal. If the world is unreal on account of it being impermanent, then the question arises as to what is the source of this unreal world? The answer that the Upaniṣads have offered to this ticklish question is in terms of reflection. The world is the reflection (*pratibimba*) of the Absolute (*brahman-ātman*) in the same measure as is a reflection in a mirror. This means that the world is real epistemically but unreal ontologically. The world as a projection or reflection is accomplished by the creative power, called *māyā,* of *brahman.* This creative power of the Absolute is, analogously speaking, of the nature of magician's illusory power. As the magician, through his power of illusion, gives rise to illusory objects, similarly does *māyā* give rise to the illusory phenomenal world of name and form. Agreed that the world is as illusory as are the objects of illusion, then why do we at all think of them as being real? The answer that is given consists of in the assertion that we consider the unreal as real because of what we may call metaphysical ignorance (*avidyā, ajñānatā*). The later Vedāntic thinkers have analysed the functioning of ignorance in the following way.

One of the ways in terms of which ignorance operates is to impute the characteristics of the unreal upon the real and of the real upon the unreal. This point is illustrated by making use of the analogy of the illusory serpent and the rope. In pitch darkness, for example, there is all the possibility of perceiving a rope as snake. Upon perceiving the rope as snake, we impose the characteristics of the unreal snake upon the real rope. In doing so we think of the snake as being real, and consequently have the same fearful experience that we have upon perceiving a real snake. In according reality to a non-existing snake, we thereby impute the characteristic of realness of the real rope upon the snake. This operation of ignorance is known as that of superimposition (*adhyāsaropa*). Ignorance also functions as a concealing power (*āvaraṇa-śakti*). It conceals the

real, and thereby allows an individual to fall into the trap of error. The concealing power of ignorance is similar to the clouds. As the clouds conceal the light of the sun, so is concealed the nature of *brahman-ātman* by ignorance. It is only upon the removal of ignorance that we come to know what is real and what is unreal. This process of differentiating the real from the unreal is called discrimination. One of the ways of attaining to the state of discrimination is that of Yoga. The other way is formulated by the Upaniṣads in terms of gnosis. The effort of the Upaniṣads, thus, is to find out such a mode of existence that would free man from the cycle of birth and death, from what we call historical finitude and from the terror of non-being. It is at this point of search that the Upaniṣads made the discovery of the "secret knowledge" (*guhya-jñāna*), and the one who acquires it gains access to the unconditioned mode of existence in terms of recognising his essential nature to be non-different from the Absolute, which is known as *brahman-ātman*.

The Way to Secret Knowledge

It is one thing to say that there is secret knowledge by the acquirement of which the unconditioned state of *brahman-ātman* is realised, but it is quite a different kettle of fish to find out as to how to gain access to this hidden knowledge. It is at this point of reflection that the discovery concerning the yogic methods was made as being one of the most suitable ways or means of reaching the fountainhead of secret knowledge. The term *yoga*, in its technical sense, is used for the first time in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*[6] and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.[7] However, the yogic techniques, in one form or the other, are also to be found in most of the early Upaniṣadic texts.

It is *a priori* assumed by the Upaniṣads that the acquirement of the secret knowledge of *brahman-ātman* results in the emancipation of the embodied existent from the process of becoming. The yogic techniques of concentration as a kind of ascetical praxis are seen as an appropriate instrument for the attainment of salvific secret knowledge of *brahman-ātman*.[8] The ascetical techniques of concentration produce "the mystical

flame"[9] in the ascetic upon turning consciousness inward, and as a result of which is gained access to the secret knowledge in terms of realising *brahman-ātman* as constituting our essential nature. This mystical fire that comes to be on account of concentrative absorption is viewed as a practical "bridge to the supreme *brahman*."[10] Some of the concentrative methods that give rise to the mystical knowlege of *brahman* are enumerated in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.[11] The complete and full expression of the yogic techniques is, however, given in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*[12] thus:

> Holding the body steady with three (upper parts) erect,
> And causing the senses with the mind to enter into heart,
> A wise man with the Brahmā-boat should cross over.
> One should breathe through his nostrils with diminished breath.
> Like that chariot yoked with vicious horses,
> His mind the wise man should restrain undistractedly.
> In clean, level spot, free from pebbles, fire and gravel,
> By the sound of water and other propinquities,
> Favourable to thought, not offensive to the eye,
> In a hidden retreat, protected from the wind, one should practice yoga.

From the above statements is made quite explicit that the aim of yogic techniques, first and foremost, is to regulate breathing in such a manner as would result in the control over the operations of the senses and of the mind. It is against this background that the yogic techniques of concentration as well as ideology need to be evaluated. The techniques or methods have been so devised as would result in restricting the natural functioning of the senses and of the mind. The normal sense faculties and the mind are seen like the untamed horses. One can ride the horse only by taming its violent temper through training. Likewise can one reach the other shore only upon bringing under control the senses and mind. Thus the kind of praxis, as developed by the Upaniṣads, has been systematised in the context of the vision that the Indian mind has been searching, which is as to how to overcome death. It is this Śramaṇic vision of withdrawal, of renunciation, of self-abnegation that has been the basis of Upaniṣadic view of life,

and the system of Yoga has given to this vision a practical shape in the form of such methods that terminate in the withdrawal from the world as well as in the introversion of consciousness. This gnostic vision of withdrawal of the Upaniṣads is being realised exprimentally by the ascetic upon following the yogic methods of concentration. Withdrawal, and thereby introversion, is seen as leading to a state of experience whereby death is overcome through life, which at the same time is equated with absolute autonomy. It is the concern for autonomy from death that has been made the basis of yogic techniques of concentration.

Systematisation of Yogic Techniques

Upon having found out, through repeated experimentation, that the techniques of Yoga have proved to be efficacious in effecting the introversion of consciousness, the task that needed to be attended was to bring the scattered elements of yogic techniques together by giving them a systematic from. Thus the techniques of Yoga, in due course of time, were systematised by Patañjali in his mangnum opus, namely, the *Yogasūtra*. This new development of giving a systematic shape to the diffused yogic techniques of concentration was determined by the need of the hour. Whatever be the orientation of later yogic schools that have arisen after the composition of the *Yogasūtra*, the roots of all of them are deeply rooted within the broad framework that Patañjali has formulated. The yogic schools that have arisen after Patañjali may, broadly speaking, be divided into two segments: Brāhmaṇical and non-Brāhmaṇical. The schools that have a Brāhmaṇical ethos have emerged within the womb of orthodoxy, whereas the latter schools of Yoga, particularly the schools that have a Tantric ethos, have emerged from the peripheral fringes of orthodoxy. Even though the latter schools of Yoga may be containing such elements of practice that are antinomian or subversive, yet their dogmatics has its basis in the worldview that Brāhmaṇism has ushered in. As far as the main framework of the techniques of concentration of different schools of Yoga is concerned, it is fundamentally derived from the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali.

With the coming into being of the various schools of Yoga, there developed accordingly different yogic traditions. This variety of yogic traditions would mean that there would be some difference on points of emphasis among them concerning yogic ideology and praxis. Each school of Yoga has its own views and theoretical approach to Reality. Even though there may be much diversity of opinion among the different schools of Yoga, there, however, is a common goal that all of them share collectively, and the goal is salvation. We may say that it is the classical Yoga of Patañjali which, from an historical viewpoint, is the most important, and it is this school that has provided the necessary wherewithal to all the schools of Yoga, whether orthodox or unorthodox.

The most prominent schools of Yoga, from the point of their popularity, are the following schools of Rājayoga, Haṭhayoga, Jñānayoga, Bhaktiyoga, and Karmayoga. The need for these schools is said to have arisen on account of different mental and emotional dispositions of people. A person who, for example, has an intellectual bent of mind will find perfect satisfaction in Rājayoga, whereas a person who has an emotional bent of mind will be served best by Bhaktiyoga.

Rājayoga: The school of Rājayoga, on account of its intellectualistic orientation, is spoken of as being "the royal yoga." It is a school of Yoga that is contrasted with the Haṭhayoga, which is more inclined towards the cultivation of the body than the intellect. Patañjali in his *Yogasūtra* has formulated the fundamental tenets of this school of Yoga. Its point of departure is to overcome the fluctuations of the mind through such methods of concentration whereby consciousness is enabled to abide in its own-from (*svarūpa*). The Rājayoga firmly adheres to the view that it is mind, together with body, that gives rise to experiences that are painful. In order to overcome the ills of life, Rājayoga endeavours, before anything else, at arresting the psychophysical flux through the process of immobility of the body and of withdrawal of the senses from the world. The ills of life, so it is assumed, can never be overcome unless the dynamic flow of life is immobilised. The immobilisation of the flow of life is equated with the

attainment of what is called emancipation. The emancipatory state of the Self (*puruṣa*) is also spoken of as that of isolation (*kaivalyaṃ*). The Yogī of this path (*mārga*) makes basically use of two methods for arresting the psychophysical flow of life, and the methods are those of practice (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*virāgya*). The text of the *Yogasūtra*[13] has interpreted "practice" to mean a method by which a Yogī gains mastery over the psychophysical flux of life by arresting it. Dispassion,[14] on the other hand, is said to represent such a state of mind in which the desire for anything is completely overcome. Dispassion encapsulates in itself the cultivation of such a mental disposition that is permeated by the spirit of renunciation (*tyāga*). It is believed that no yogic technique will bear its required fruit unless the practitioner (*abhyāsī*) is seized by dispassion. It is not merely the external withdrawal from the world or giving up of possession that constitutes dispassion. Real dispassion, however, consists of to what degree detachment has been internalised. The need for sensual desires or for worldly possessions will diminish to the measure dispassion has been internalised. It is upon the internalisation of dispassion that the mind does not give rise to negative desires, and thereby does not remain in the state of restlessness. It is such a dispassionate and unruffled mind that alone makes effective use of yogic concentrative techniques. Consequently is accomplished the task of the suppression of whirls of the mind, which is one of the important goals of this from of Yoga.

It is the belief of Yoga system that the Self is of the nature of unlimited glory and splendour. It shines forth the moment the operations of the mind are successfully brought to the point of complete stillness, which means that there is no arising of thoughts or desires in the mind. The surface as well as the depth of the mind is as calm as are waters of a still lake or a pool. In the state of agitation the mind wrongly identifies the Self with what is called the personality complex (*asmitā*). This erroneous identification of the Self with the non-self, which is the psychosomatic complex, occurs due to ignorance (*avidyā*), and ignorance influences the mind when its operations are operative. As a consequence of ignorance is given rise to ego

(*ahaṃ*), which terminates in the emergence of such negative dispositions as attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*) and thirst for life (*abhiniveśa*). All these characteristics of a non-existent ego are ascribed by the mind, due to ignorance, upon the Self, which in fact is free from such attributes or dispositions. The Self as non-relational category (*tattva*) is known at that moment when consciousness, through deep absorptive meditation, sinks into itself, which, in other words, means the abiding of the Self in its own nature. Once this absorptive state is attained, the practitioner of this path is enabled to have the knowledge of the Self as being unattached, unrelated, and free from the polluting stains of embodied existence. This state of knowledge concerning the Self as being a witnessing consciousness is technically called enstasy (*samādhi*).

In order to arrive at this ultimate state of enstasy, the author of the *Yogasūtra* has prescribed eight disciplinary limbs (*aṣṭāṅga*). The steps or limbs are so formulated as to make it possible for the adept to ascend in a graduated manner the ladder of Yoga. It is upon gaining perfection in one disciplinary limb of Yoga that the adept, under the guidance of a spiritual director (*guru*), can undertake the cultivation of another limb. The eight limbs of the Yoga system are the following:

1. *yama*—restraint
2. *niyama*—discipline
3. *āsana*—posture
4. *prāṇāyāma*—breath-control
5. *pratyāhāra*—withdrawal of senses
6. *dhāraṇā*—concentration
7. *dhyāna*—meditation
8. *samādhi*—enstasy

Once the Yogī follows meticulously these eight yogic steps of discipline, he is assured of gaining access to the mystical state of enstasy. Insofar as the experience of enstasy is concerned, it is, according to the *Yogasūtra*, of two types: Determinte (*svavikalpa, saṃprajñatā*) and indeterminate (*nirvikalpa, asaṃprajñatā*). The former state of enstasy automatically terminates in the latter state. It is at the indeter-

minate level of enstasy that the revelation of the Self as being unattached and unrelated occurs, and this revelation is equated with the knowledge of the state of "isolation" (*kaivalyam*) of the Self.

Haṭhayoga: The very term *haṭha* visualises the character of Haṭhayoga. The term denotes exertion or force. The Haṭhayogīs have given an esoteric interpretation of the term by saying that the first two syllables—*ha*—represent the sun, whereas the last three syllables—*ṭha*—represent the moon. Given this interpretation, the Haṭhayogīs maintain that the aim of Haṭhayoga is to unify all those forces within that conceptually are experienced as opposites. This idea of bringing unity between forces that are dialectically opposed to each other has its basis in the Tantric idea of Reality as consisting of bi-polar principles. This view of Reality as being bi-polar is similar to the *puruṣa* (Self-moand) and Nature (*prakṛti*) of the Sāṃkhya philosophy. Even the Taoists look at Reality as being characterised by *yin* and *yang* principles. For the Haṭhayogīs the bi-polar principles are symbolised by the right and left sides of man, by the male and female principles, by exhalation and inhalation, and by Śiva and Śakti. As the Tāntrikas desire the experience of the unity of Being in terms of the co-mingling of Śiva and Śakti, likewise the Haṭhayogīs aim at experiencing Being in terms of the unity of opposites.

The methods of Haṭhayoga have their basis in the idea of physical wellbeing. It is believed that no spiritual good will be accomplished unless the body is transformed into a fit vehicle for the task of overcoming death itself. Thus most of the techniques or exercises of this system of Yoga are so formulated as would be possible for the practitioner to apply them at the psychophysical level. The aim of the techniques is to transform the body into a glorified or divine body (*divya-śarīra*), which means that the body becomes as adamantine and illuminative as is a diamond. It is for this reason that the body of an accomplished Haṭhayogī is also called diamond body (*vajra-deha*). The aim of a Haṭhayogī, thus, is more materialistic than spiritual, and in terms of which the body is so transformed as would result in its immortality. The

main characteristic features of Haṭhayoga may be summarised thus:

1. Influcened by Tantricism, Haṭhayoga thereby shows its antinomian character, in that it discards the orthodox view of the body as being a perishable commodity. For the orthodoxy the body not only is perishable, but is also the source of all the ills that embodied form of existence represents. The aim of orthodoxy, thus, has always been of affecting disjunction between the self and the body. The Haṭhayoga, on the contrary, holds an opposite view, in that it believes that it is not by dissociating from the body that the cherished goal of salvation can be reached, but by transforming the body into an adamantine one that the goal of salvation can be realised in terms of becoming immortal. The body thus is seen as the only available instrument or means of obtaining this soteriological freedom in terms of the attainment of immortality.

2. Even though the emphasis is upon the development of the body, it does not mean that the Haṭhayoga has no concern for the interiority of man/woman.

3. Insofar as philosophical framework of Haṭhayoga is concerned, it adheres to the non-dualistic view of Reality. In order to account for the phenomenalisation of the Absolute, it does it in terms of postulating the relative duality of male/female.

4. The Haṭhayoga has developed a keen sense of analysis with regard to the inner phenomena of an individual, viz., it does not see an individual simply in terms of the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*), but believes that there are different layers like the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), the vital force, mystical veins of energy (*cakra*) and the hidden energy (*kuṇḍalinī*), and it is these non-visible layers within the gross body that make up the totality of the psychophysical complex of what is called an individual. All these esoteric ideas are already foreshadowed in the Upaniṣads in terms of the five coverings (*pañca-kośa*) and of various mystical veins.

Since the Haṭhayoga has a positive view of the body, it is but natural for it to give rise to what is called the culture of the body (*kāya-sādhanā*). As one of the goals, in addition to the

soteriological one, is to make body healthy by making it immune to disease, so this system of Yoga has devised certain methods of cleansing (*śodhana*) the internal and external organs. Some of the purificatory methods that it has devised for this purpose are the *dhautī, vasti, neti, naulī, trāṭaka,* and *kapāla-bhaṭi.* Collectively these methods are spoken of as six acts (*ṣaṭ-karman*).

It would, however, be wrong to say that the culture of the body is the only concern about which Haṭhayoga propagates. Insofar as the soteriological goal of salvation is concerned, Haṭhayoga does not differ much from other schools or traditions of Yoga. It proclaims its aim to be the attainment of transcendental freedom. It understands, like other Indian spiritual traditions, freedom in terms of knowledge of the Self. The need for the culture of the body is seen in the context of physical hurdles, viz., physical or mental hurdles can be overcome only if the entire apparatus called the body is healthy. A healthy body is seen as the most appropriate instrument for activating the divine forces that lie dormant in the body. It is within the framework of this viewpoint that the Haṭha-yoga has developed a science of techniques by the application of which a Yogī gains control over his nervous system. Once the body is made into a fit vehicle for carrying out its assigned task, the next step of operation for a Haṭhayogī is to work upon the subtle body. The system of Haṭhayoga believes that the subtle body is composed of vital force (*prāṇa*), and so is seen as a field of bio-energy in which a number of veins (*nāḍī*) operate. The central vein, also known as the "gracious vein" (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*), is the most important vein among all the subtle viens. It is along this vein that the six mystical centres or wheels of energy are located. In order to awaken the hidden power (*kuṇḍalinī*) within the body, which is said to be lying dormant at the lowest wheel of energy called the root-wheel (*mūlādhāra-cakra*), the Yogī employs the technique of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*). Upon the awakening of this hidden power, there is a transformation in the personality of the Yogī. The transformation occurs when the aroused power is made to move upwards to the centre of the brain through the six mystical centres. It is the cherished aim of every Haṭhayogī to

experience the state of enstasy in terms of the fusion of this aroused power with the Absolute at the centre of the head.

The Yoga system of Patañjali has formulated the cultivation of eight disciplinary steps as being necessary for arriving at the soteriological "isolation." The system of Haṭhayoga, while following Patañjali, believes only in six limbs, and they are:

1. *āsana*—posture
2. *prāṇa-saṃrodha*—breath-control
3. *pratyāhāra*—withdrawal of senses
4. *dhāraṇā*—concentration
5. *dhyāna*—meditative absorption
6. *samādhi*—enstasy

The exclusion of the first two steps—*yama* and *niyama*—does not mean that their need is not felt. It is, rather, taken for granted that the one who follows the path of Yoga must already be following the principles of restraint and discipline. The *Gorakṣa-saṃhitā* makes it quite explicit when it states:

> (The Yogī is) one who practices chastity, who eats little, who renounces (all pleasures) and who is totally occupied with Yoga. . . .

Jñānayoga: As the meaning of the term *jñāna* is "knowledge," so it is but natural for Jñānayoga to lay emphasis upon the acquirement of knowledge of the Supreme (*parama*). The knowledge about which this Yoga speaks of is not analytical or empirical knowledge, but such knowledge of Reality that is intuitive. Further this intuitive knowledge leads to discernment (*viveka*) and in terms of which discrimination between the real and the unreal is made.

It is the spirit of non-dualism (*advaita*) that permeates this form of Yoga. This system of Yoga consists of the following seven steps:

1. *Viveka* is that faculty of discernment by which is differentiated the real from the unreal, the infinite from the finite, truth from untruth.

2. *Vairāgya* is the cultivation of such a state of mind whereby all negative desires or dispositions are eliminated. Even the desire for heaven is not entertained. It is a state of complete renunciation.

3. *Tapas* denotes such penitential excrcises whereby, on the one hand, equipoise toward the opposite conditions of life, like heat and cold, sorrow and happiness, is furthered and, on the other hand, occurs introversion, through the process of withdrawal, of consciousness. It consists of six treasures (*ṣaṭ-sampatti*), and they are:

- ǎ. *śama*—tranquillity
- b. *dama*—restraint
- c. *uparati*—mind-control
- d. *titikṣā*—endurance
- e. *samādhāna*—contemplation
- f. *śraddhā*—faith

4. *Mumukṣutva*—the burning desire for soteric freedom.
5. *Śravaṇa* is the listening of the disciple to the scriptural knowledge (*śruti-jñāna*) that is being expounded by the *guru*.
6. *Manana* denotes of reflecting over what has been heard from the *guru* concerning the nature of Reality.
7. *Nididhyāsana* means contemplation over the scriptural exposition by the *guru*. Contemplation must terminate in the attainment of the state of enstasy (*samādhi*).

These seven steps of Jñānayoga are so devised as will become possible for the seeker of liberation to attain the intuitive knowledge of *brahman-ātman*. This is how the *Vedānta-siddhānta-darśana*[15] has spoken of the seven steps that are constitutive of Jñānayoga:

> The great seers have spoken of seven stages of knowledge. Of these the first stage of knowledge is designated as "good will" (*śubha-icchā*); the second is "reflection" (*vicāraṇa*); the third is "subtlety of mind" (*tanu-mansā*); the fourth is the "attainment of lucidity" (*sattva-āpti*); the "fifth is nonattachment" (*asaṃsakti*); the sixth is the "disappearance of all objects" (*padārtha-abhāvanī*); the seventh is in "entering into the Fourth" (viz., the realisation of the Self).

Bhaktiyoga: The term *bhakti* is derived from the root *bhaj* meaning "to participate," etc. The term, in its extended sense, has come to mean "devotion of God" or "love of God." Baktiyoga is that form of spirituality in which the loving dedication to God is viewed as the goal of spiritual life. It is such a form of spirituality which, in the words of Śāṇḍilya,[16] is characterised by the "supreme attachment to the Lord." The devotee of this path is not so much interested in the attainment of abstract absorption as much as in the living experience of the presence of the Lord. The following are the different ways of expressing the moods of love for God:

1. *Śravaṇa* is a particular way of listening to the Names of God.
2. *Kīrtana* is a kind of hymn singing in which God's Name is glorified and remembered.
3. *Smaraṇa* is a meditative method of remembering the Name of God.
4. *Pāda-sevana* reflects the disposition of humility in terms of which worship is offered to the feet of the Lord.
5. *Arcanā* is the ritual worship of God.
6. *Vandanā* expresses that form of devotion in which the devotee prostrates before the image of the Lord.
7. *Dāsya* expresses that state of mind of the devotee in which he thinks of himself as the servant of the Lord.
8. *Sākhya* expresses the sentiment of friendship with God.
9. *Ātma-nivedana* expresses the self-offering of the devotee, and it is through this offering of himself that the devotee abides in God.

The experience of nearness to God comes about when the devotee, through the intensity of passionate love (*rati*), tears asunder all the barriers that cause obstructions between him and the Lord. When the intensity of love for the Lord reaches its full climax, the devotee perceives in ecstatic mood the entire cosmos as being permeated by the presence of the Lord. The ecstasy of love is experienced at the point of experience when the devotee experiences himself as being in the embrace of

the Lord. The devotee, through the ecstatic mood of love, experiences loving union with God. As to what Bhaktiyoga is, is best described in the *Bhagavadgītā*[17] thus:

> Neither by (the gnosis) of the Vedas, nor by austerities, nor by charity, nor by sacrifice can I be seen in this form in which you have seen Me. Through unswerving devotion, however, I can be seen thus, O Arjuna, and be known in essence and even entered into, O tormentor of the foe.

It is generally believed that Bhaktiyoga is the easiest way of gaining access to God. It is believed that if love for God is true and authentic, then the result comes to be immediately, which is termed as being equivalent to the "seeing" (*darśana*) of God. Thus a sincere devotee "sees nothing but love, hears only about love, speaks only of love and thinks of love alone."[18]

Karmayoga: The term *karma* is derived form the root *kṛ*, denoting "action, work, deed, effect," etc. As far as *karma* (action), in the context of Yoga, is concerned, it can be seen as a mode of spirituality in which action is performed selflessly. According to the system of Karmayoga, life is characterised by action. Passivity, in any form, is considered as the denial of life itself. Since life is identical with action, it is therefore necessary that the activities of life be so channelled as are appropriate and benevolent. A Karmayogī is of the view that it is not only absorptive meditation that terminates in the realisation of soteric goal of salvation, but the proper participation in the activities of life also can lead to the same goal. The essence of Karmayoga is explained in the *Bhagavadgītā*[19] thus:

> For, not even for a moment can anyone ever remain without performing action. Every (existent) is unwittingly made to act by the primary constitutents (*guṇa*) born of the world-ground.
>
> The world is action-bound, save when this action (is intended) as sacrifice. With that purpose (in mind), O son of Kuntī, engage in action devoid of attachment.
>
> Therefore always perform unattached the right deed (*kārya*), for the man who performs action without attachment obtains the Supreme.

If action is performed in terms of offering, it does not stain the performer of the deed. An action that is motivated stems from the womb of ignorance, and thereby ties the performer of the deed to the cycle of rebirth. The aim of Karmayoga, thus, is to lead an individual to a state of selflessness in which action is performed without self-interest (*naiṣkarmya-karma*).

What has so far been stated is the fact that all traditions or schools of Yoga aim at leading an individual existent to that of existential experience in which is experienced the absence of pain. It is this search for painless existence that every school of Yoga desires to realise. The purpose of yogic methods is to enable an individual being to realise the state of freedom from the ever-recurring cycle of rebirth. It is believed that the Yogī reaches his cherished goal of liberation by making a proper use of the methods of Yoga.

It is this theme of Yoga—liberation from pain—that runs through every yogic text. To throw light on this theme, we have, first of all, tried to discuss the basic themes that are constitutive of what we call the mainstream of Indian spirituality. It is these main views or themes that have determined the main religious outlook of the vast majority of Indian people. We also have tried to point out as to how these basic themes have been worked out in the classical Yoga of Patañjali as well as in other schools of Yoga. Finally, we have tried to trace the historical development of the theoretical and practical aspects of Yoga.

References

1. Cf. *Ṛgveda*, 10.136.
2. *Atharvaveda*, 11.3.5; 15.7.1.
3. *Ṛgveda*, 1.109; 8.59.6; 10.136.2.
4. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 33.12.3.
5. *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, 2.5; *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 5.19-24.
6. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4: *yoga ātma*. . . .
7. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.12: *adyātam yoga*. . . . For further details see *Chāndogyo-paniṣad*, 8.15; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.5.23.

8. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 1.3.8-13; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* 6.9.
9. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* 1.4 ff.
10. Ibid., 3.2.
11. Ibid., 3.3-4.
12. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* 2.8-13; cf. *Bhagavadgītā,* 5.27; 6.13.
13. *Yogasūtra,* 1.3.14.
14. Ibid., 1.15.
15. *Vedānta-siddhānta-darśana,* 190-92.
16. *Bhaktisūtra,* 1.2.
17. *Bhagavadgītā,* 11.53-54.
18. See Nārada, *Bhaktisūtra.*
19. *Bhagavadgītā,* 3.5, 9, 19.

Part I

THE PATH OF YOGA

1

The Early Sources of Yoga

As the historical origins of Yoga are hidden in the mysterious layers of history, so it is difficult to say with certainty as to when the real history of Yoga was initiated.[1] This much, however, can be asserted with some degree of certainty that Yoga, as an archaic ecstatic system of praxis, certainly belongs to that period of history when human thinking was basically mythical and pre-logical.[2] Prior to tracing the hisotrical origins of the elements of Yoga in the sacred literature of the Indo-Aryans,[3] it would be far better, at this initial juncture of discussion, to find out as to whether the existence of some yogic elements, prior to the arrival of the Aryans into the northern plains of India, can be discovered among people that were indigenous.

The Pre-Historical Sources of Yoga

The archaeological excavations that have so far been carried out at the sites of the Indus and of Harappa have opened up new vistas of understanding concerning the origins of pre-Aryan civilisation of India. Some scholars,[4] on the basis of the archaeological discoveries made at the sites of the Indus and of Harappa, have formed an opinion that the prehistory of Yoga may be traced back to what has come to be known as the Indus Civilisation. Certain seals have been discovered on which are depicted deities in such postures as would indicate them to be the practitioners of Yoga. There is one particular seal on which is engraved a deity who is enthroned on a low throne and who is surrounded by four animals: an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros

and a bull. Pair of antelope-like animals is seen beneath the throne. The cross-legged figure on the throne has been identified with Śiva, and so the figure has been called as that of proto-Śiva. Śiva, in popular Hinduism, has been spoken of as the Great Yogī (*mahā-yogī*) as well as the Lord of Beasts (*paśupati*). It is on the basis of this identification of the figure on the seal that the scholars are of the view that the traces of the prehistory of some of the elements of Yoga are located in the Indus Civilisation. It is on the basis of this understanding that led Sir John Marshall to assert that "that aspect of Hinduism which is bound with animism and the cult of Śiva and Mother-goddess,"[5] is hardly distinguishable from the kind of religion that the seals of the Indus depict. He writes about the three-faced deity in a yogic posture in the following manner:

> The god, who is three-faced, is seated on a low Indian throne in a typical attitude of Yoga, with legs doubled beneath him, heel to heel, and toes turned downwards. Over his breast is a triangular pectoral or perhaps a series of necklaces of torques. . . . The phallus (is) seemingly exposed . . . crowning his head is a pair of horns meeting in a tall headdress. On either side of the god are four animals, an elephant and a tiger on his right, a rhinoceros and a buffalo on his left. Beneath the throne are two deer standing with heads regardant and horns turned to the throne.[6]

Piggot explains the symbolism of prototypic Śiva that is depicted on the seal thus:

> There can be little doubt that we have the prototype of Great God Śiva as Lord of the Beasts and the Prince of Yogīs; he may have been conceived as four-faced, and with four animal looks to the four quarters of the earth. This would indeed recall the symbolic elephant, lion, horse and bull on Mauryan columns of the third century BC at Sāranātha. The deer by god's throne makes another significant link with later religion, and with Sāranātha, for, similarly placed, they are the inevitable accompaniment of Buddha in representation of the Deer Park Sermon.[7]

It is not known as to how the end of such a highly developed civilisation as that of the Indus came about. There is a view that maintains that it were the invading Aryans who seem to have caused the destruction of the Indus Civilisation. Whatever causes may have led to the destruction, and thereby to the

disappearance, of the Indus Civilisation, the fact remains that its end has been abrupt. It cannot, however, be assumed that the destruction of this advanced culture has been so complete as would not leave its imprint upon the minds of invading Aryans. The invisible influence of this culture upon the Aryans may have taken a long period to fructify, but the influence is there and can be seen clearly in the practice of Yoga in those segments of society that lived on the periphery of Aryan orthodoxy.[8]

The theory of continuity of the Indus Civilisation is basically based upon the assumption that the figure on the seal is distinctively yogic in representation. Asserting that the theory of continuity itself is based upon tenuous inferential grounds, so the critics say that the Indus Civilisation somehow has impregnated itself into the Aryan religiosity does not hold much water. The cross-legged figure on the seal, according to the critics of the continuity theory, in no way proves that the roots of the prehistory of Yoga are located in the Indus Civilisation. It is maintained that the people of South-Asian countries generally sit in a cross-legged posture, and so the cross-legged figure upon the seal in no way confirms it to be a yogic representation. The other argument that is advanced in favour of the theory of continuity is based upon the ithyphallic character of the figure. The critics, however, point out that such a representation hardly can be assumed to be yogic, in that the ideology of Yoga is quite the reverse, which is that of abstention, to what ithyphallism represents. The defenders of the theory point out that the Vedic literature as well as the yogic manuals speak of Yogīs (*yati*) as persons whose semen is not spilled even when their penis is erect (*ūrdhava-retas*). The critics, however, maintain that the term actually means the opposite of what its literal meaning suggests. It really means, according to the critics, that a real Yogī or seer is one who is capable of keeping the semen "up" or "above," viz., who is chaste and lives a life of chastity.[9]

As everything concerning the prehistory of India is still obscure and in the misty state of unclarity, it is, therefore, difficult to say with certainty as to whether the traces of Yoga are found in the Indus Civilisation or whether the prototypic Śiva represents the Paurāṇic Śiva as being the Great Yogī. It is

better that we suspend our judgement till the time definite and certain knowledge is gained about the continuity of certain elements of the Indus culture in and through the religious culture of the Aryans.

Yoga in the Vedas

The archaeological findings of the Indus Valley may be interesting in themselves, but they do not in any way add anything new to the stock of knowledge that we have at present concerning the origin of Yoga. There are, however, some indications, though they are unsatisfactory, that tell us that some kind of yogic techniques existed, in an embryonic form, during the Vedic period. Number of indications are to be found both in the *Ṛgveda*[10] and the *Atharvaveda*[11] concerning the existence of some protoyogic techniques as well as of philosophy.[12]

Yoga, as we know it at present, may be traced back to the two allied Vedic traditions, namely, to the tradition of ascetical practices and to the sacrificial symbolism of the Brāhmaṇas where the sacrifice is symbolically interiorised through meditative process. It is within the context of these two Vedic traditions that the other forms of folkloric motifs have found their place, which, in due course of time, would express themselves in the peripheral schools of Yoga.

In the Vedas the seeds of Yoga are not actual. They are, rather, potential. The Vedic texts abound with references to ascetics and to their ecstasy. The kind of description that is given in these texts about the ascetics may not directly explain the character of yogic praxis. They nevertheless throw some light on the later developments of yogic ideology and praxis.

The earliest reference to an ascetic is found in the *Ṛgveda*.[13] Here the ascetic is described as the one who is longhaired (*keśin*). The longhaired ascetic reflects a typical Yogī whose locks of hair usually fall upon his shoulders. The ascetic is depicted as the one who wears clothes that are "soiled yellow," indicating thereby the colour of the habit that the orthodox mendicants are supposed to wear. The ascetic, when in ecstasy,[14] is supposed to be in such a state of consciousness whereby it becomes possible for the deities to indwell in him. When in ecstasy, he proclaims ". . . we are mounted on the winds. You, mortals, can perceive

only our body." The attainment of such occult powers, on account of meditative ecstasy, will later on be well documented in the *Yogsūtra*[15] as well as in the manuals of peripheral schools of Yoga.[16] Thus we find such description of Yogīs in the yogic literature where it is asserted that a perfect Yogī (*siddha-yogī*)[17] can mount the winds, can fly through the sky whenever he wills, can read the mind of people, and so on and so forth. Being powerful on account of the attainment of occult powers, the ascetic of the *Ṛgveda*, like the typical occultist of folkfore, is shown as being the master of two seas, namely, of the rising and the setting sun. He, being powerful, can even conquer death, and so is shown as having the capacity of drinking the poison from the cup of Rudra.[18] This tendency of transmuting human body into an immortal elixir would be the be-end of spirituality of such medieval yogic schools as the Haṭhayoga. The idea of conquering death would even be one of the major themes of the Upaniṣads, and would be expressed beautifully thus: Lead me from death to immortality.

The important aspect that is found in this description of the ascetic, and which is relevant to us, is the explanation of ecstasy. The character of ecstasy of the Yogī may be understood in the context of the power of becoming invisible. The power of becoming invisible is the result of ecstasy, and ecstasy itself is the end product of ascetical meditation. It is an understanding that tells us that the ascetic, through the power of ecstasy, is able to transcend the causal laws of Nature, and through this transcendence transcends temporality and thereby death. It is in the transcendence of finitude that the cosmic structure of reality is known and understood. It is a state in which the ascetic experiences his homecoming, viz., he experiences the returning back to the paradisal state.[19]

It is necessary, at this point of discussion, to point out about a group of people who, like the ascetics, are the practitioners of the art of ecstasy. This group of people, called Vrātyas,[20] lived on the fringe of Aryan society. Many scholars are of the view that the Vrātyas belonged to that ancient Indian peripheral society among whom the yogic praxis was valued and cherished.

The entire book, fifteenth of the *Atharvaveda* is devoted to

the Vrātyas. Although the text is obscure and difficult to understand, it becomes, however, clear on close reading that the Vrātyas were a group of nomadic people who were considered outcastes by the Aryans. The Vrātyas seem to have been the earliest Aryan intruders into the Indian sub-continent. The later Aryan hordes kept them out from their social circle. Although the Vrātyas spoke the same language as the later Aryans, even then the Vrātyas were considered as untouchables by the Aryan orthodoxy. The Vrātyas are said to have lived a nomadic life, and as such lived in hordes or in small communities (*vrata*). Being on the periphery of society, they were considered by the dominant Aryan groups as being social outcastes. The Vrātyas, however, seem to have been infleuential and so the orthodox Aryans were compelled by circumstances to introduce such religious rites by the performance of which a Vrātya could be incorporated into the Vedic cult. This incorporation of the Vrātyas must definitely have left its imprint upon the Vedic religious culture.

Thc Vrātyas are said to have been the worshippers of Rudra, and Rudra of the Vedas has all those characteristics that the Śiva of popular Hinduism possesses. Thus there exists an indirect link between Śiva and the Rudra of the Vedas, between the prototypic Śiva of the Indus and the Paurāṇic Śiva. Śiva of popular Hinduism, on the one hand, is viewed as a great ascetic as well as Yogī and, on the other hand, is very licentious. All these contradictory aspects concerning Śiva are well represented in Tantricism. Not only are Vrātyas shown as the worshippers of Śiva; they also are depicted as being the practitioners of the art of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), which is one of the most important limbs of yogic praxis. It is the practice of breath-control that holds the key insofar as Yoga is concerned. In the *Atharvaveda*[21] mention is made concerning Vrātyas as having the knowledge of "seven *prāṇas*, seven *apānas* and seven *vyānas*," viz., of the various psycho-physiological functions of the life-force (*prāṇa*). The three sets of life-force, analogically speaking, have been identified thus: The first seven *prāṇas* are the water (*āpa*), fire (*agni*), sun (*āditya*), moon (*candramā*), wind (*pavamāna*), cattle (*paśva*); and creatures (*prajā*). The second set of seven *apānas* consists of

the full moon (*pūrṇamāsī*), faith (*śraddhā*), day moon's quarter (*aṣṭaka*), sacrifice (*yajña*), day of the new moon (*amāvasyā*), initiation (*dīkṣā*), and sacrificial gift (*dakṣiṇā*). Lastly, the seven *vyānas* are the earth (*bhūmi*), mid-region (*antarikṣa*), sky (*dyāus*), stellar constellation (*nakṣatra*), the seasons (*ṛtu*), that which concerns the seasons (*ārtva*), and the year (*saṃvatsara*).

The Vrātyas were not only experts in certain breathing exercises, but also performed sexual rites that would later become the basis of some of the left-hand Tantric practices. Whenever they travelled, a bard and a female *puṃścali* (viz., the male mover) accompanied them. In one of their midsummer ceremonies, called *mahāvrata*, the Vrātyas engaged themselves in sexual intercourse with a *puṃścali*.[22] While performing the sexual ritual, the priest (*hotṛ*) touched a hundred-stringed harp by proclaiming: "I strike thee for *prāṇa, apāna* and *vyāna*."[23] The priest swung himself, during the ritual, in a swing in the process of the proclamation of the three breaths. The swing symbolises the "ship to heaven," and the sacrificer as the bird flying over it. These symbols confirm that the Vrātyas were the practitioners of the art of mystical ecstasy. It is in such-like practices that the roots of some of the elements of Yoga may be found.

Further it is well to remember that the Vrātyas cultivated such a mode of lifestyle that reminds us of the many later-day Yogīs. They wore a dress that was black in colour. They carried turbans on their heads. They had two skins hanging from their shoulders, and carried a trident in their hands. The strange living habits of the Vrātyas foreshadow the Śaivite yogic cults like the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas.

It must be clear by now that the traces of some of the yogic techniques and practices go far back in history, and there are parallels to be found between these ancient practices and the modern day yogic and Tantric practices. Whoever the Vrātyas might have been, it is quite clear that the ancient Vedic literature reflects a process of synthesis, both at the religious and cultural levels, between what the Aryans inherited from the past, particularly from the Indus Civilisation, and their own. it is this inclusivistic viewpoint of the Aryans that has permeated much of Indian culture. This inclusivistic vision is

confirmed when, for example, Sir John Marshall writes: "Like Śaivism, Yoga had its origin among the pre-Aryan population, and this explains why it was not until the Epic Period (200 BC-AD 400) that it came to play an important role in the Indo-Aryan religion." [24]

The other important yogic element that has its roots in the Vedic ethos is the notion of *tapas* (austerity, mystical ardour, and penitential mode of life).[25] It is a word that expresses the various shades of ascetical practices. In the *Ṛgveda*,[26] *tapas* is viewed such a creative power that emerges within the ascetic upon his having undergone rigorous forms of asceticism. Upon its emergence, this creative power is made use of both at the cosmic and spiritual levels. It is through *tapas* that an ascetic acquires such occult powers as clairvoyance as well as the power of entering the bodies of other people. Even cosmogenesis is explained in terms of *tapas*. It is said that Prajāpati, the Primal Man, generated the cosmos through his creative power of *tapas*. It is through the heat of austerity that he acquires the power of generation.[27] We are also told that, prior to the commencement of the beginning of time, there was nothing but non-being (*asat*), and from non-being the faculty of thought (*manas*) was born, which, through the practice of austerity, allowed the birth of smoke, fire, light, etc., to take place. And at the end of the scale of genesis came Prajāpati into being.[28]

It is this idea of austerity that has become the basis of yogic praxis and ideology.[29] In the sacrifice-oriented religion of the Vedas the power of austerity is realised through the performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice itself is seen as a mode of austerity. The sacrifice-oriented rituals, while reflecting austerity, facilitated the passage for the emergence of occult powers. In one of the sacrifices, namely, the *soma*-sacrifice, the sacrificer (*yajamāna*) and his wife are asked to perform the ritual of initiation (*dīkṣā*). The performance of the ritual of initiation consists of such ascetical practices as fasting, night vigil, and so on. It is such austere looking practices that constitute the asceticism of Yoga. In this way continuity between sacrifice and austerity is maintained—and this continuity is well reflected in Tantricism, as no ascetical action is possible

apart from a corresponding ritual.

Further we come to know that the power that is acquired through fasting, night vigil, silent meditation, can also be obtained by practising such austere exercises that terminate in controlling the breathing process. In the Brāhmanas, which contain the liturgical explanations of the Vedic sacrifices, the holding of exhalation and inhalation together is transformed into a kind of liturgical ritual chant. It is maintained that those who are engaged in the recitation of the *Gāyatrī-stotra* must withhold breath.[30] In the *Atharvaveda* are already to be found the seeds of the belief that the practitioner of breath-control is able to generate within the power of generation.[31] It is, however, in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* that a more precise information is available concerning the practice of breath-control. The aim of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) both in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas is to interiorise the ascetical power whereby the transcendence of human condition is actualised.

The conceptual understanding of austerity in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas would, on the one hand, terminate in the assimilation of asceticism within the frame of reference of sacrifice itself and, on the other hand, sacrifice itself is seen as a means of ascetical praxis, nay austerity itself. As a means of knowing as to what constitutes asceticism, sacrifice, thus, is seen as the most appropriate tool for gaining access to the hidden or mystical power that is both within and without. It is in the crucible of this assimilation that real synthesis between the Vedic and non-Vedic forms of asceticism takes place.

The synthesisation of two cultures, Aryan and non-Aryan, is really reflected in the mystical speculation of the Brāhmanas. The heart of the speculation is sacrifice. The importance of sacrifice in the life of an average Aryan is continued in the Brāhmaṇas. It is not the gods that are given importance in the Brāhmaṇas; it is, rather, sacrifice that is of supreme importance. The gods themselves are believed to depend for their survival on the offerings that are made into various kinds of sacrifice: "It is sacrifice, O Indra, which has made you so powerful. . . . It was worship that aided your thunder when you split the dragon."[32] It is sacrifice that accords significance to the gods.[33] The gods, in the beginning, were conceived as

being simply mortal. It is sacrifice that has made them immortal.[34] The cult of sacrifice, from the practical religious standpoint, can be viewed as belonging to the realm of "works." By accumulating merit the sacrificer, so it is asserted, obtains self-integration, and the story of Prajāpati reflects it very clearly. It is through sacrifice that the scattered limbs of Prajāpati were brought together[35]—and togetherness is the symbol of unitary integration.

There are some very important symbols to be found in the myth of Prajāpati. The re-making of Prajāpati through sacrifice connotes both the cosmic continuity as well as returning back to the paradisal state that must have existed prior to the fashioning of the world by Prajāpati. The sacrifice, thus, is transformed into a kind of initiation, in that, through the initiation of sacrifice, Prajāpati is reborn. The initiatory structure of the sacrifice becomes quite explicit when we read the following from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa:*[36]

> Him they consecrate (*dīkṣā*); the priests make him into an embryo again. They sprinkle the waters, and the waters are the seed. . . . They conduct him to the hut of the consecrated: the hut of the consecrated is the womb of the consecrated; verily, thus, they conduct him to his womb. . . . With a garment they cover him; the garment is the caul. . . . Above that is the black antelope skin; the placenta is above caul. . . . He closes his hands; verily, with the closing of hands the embryo lies within; with the closed hands the child is born. . . . Having loosened the black antelope skin, he descends to the final bath; therefore embryos are born freed from the placenta; with the garment he descends; therefore a child is born with a caul.

The initiatory structure of sacrifice is not a special ingenuity of the priests. Initiation among all the religions has been linked to the birth of a child. It is so because the one who is initiated discards the old way of life by entering into a new life into which he has been initiated. In biblical language, for example, baptism is the symbol of initiation in terms of which the baptised abandons the natural man by entering the supernatural realm of grace. The symbolism of initiation in the Brāhmaṇas, thus, has not simply to be viewed in terms of the appropriation of hidden knowledge. It is by dying to the old

man, through ritual initiation, that the hidden knowledge can be acquired. And the one who is in possession of this knowledge has complete sway over the gods.[37] It is this understanding of mystical knowledge as well as of initiation that will be the basis of the knowledge for the acquirement of which a Yogī aspires for, and which he acquires upon attaining the mystical state of enstasy (*samādhi*). Although in the Upanisads the efficacy of sacrifice loses its significance,[38] but the concern for the appropriation of mystical knowledge gains ascendance over everything else. The main concern of the Upaniṣads is centered on one point, and that is the assimilation of hidden knowledge, viz., a knowledge that is non-empirical and thereby transcendent.

In the Vedas as well as in the Brāhmaṇas sacrifice is identified with the ascetical ardour or heat (*tapas*). The sacrifice, as a means of ascetical ardour, opens up the possibility for gods to become immortal. The gods, through ascetical ardour, appropriate enormous occult powers, and the god Indra, for example, becomes so powerful as would enable him to subdue the heavens.[39] This idea of acquiring power through the austerity of sacrifice is prominently displayed in the Brāhmaṇas: "The gods gained their divine rank through austerity."[40] The transition from the idea of sacrifice as offering to that of *tapas* becomes explicit when the shift concerning the utility of sacrifice is detected. The Brāhmaṇas look at the sacrifice as austerity itself, and as such it is an inward offering in which the physiological functions of the body are symbolically interpreted as being equivalent to the sacrifice-oriented libations. It is in this context that breathing is understood as a form of unceasing sacrificial libation. The breathing exercise itself, thus, is identified with the fire-sacrifice. This idea comes out forcefully in ihe *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*[41] when we read:

> The Inner Agnihotra . . . they call it. As long as, verily, a person is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Then he is sacrificing breath in speech. As long as, verily, a person is breathing, he is not able to speak. Then he is sacrificing speech into breath. These two are unending, immortal oblations; whether working or sleeping, one is sacrificing continuously, uninterruptedly. Now, whatever other oblations there are, they are limited, for they consist of work (*karma*). Knowing this

very thing, verily, indeed, the ancients did not sacrifice the Agnihotra sacrifice.

Implicitly this very idea is foreshadowed in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*[42] where interiorisation of sacrifice is declared in these terms: "If one offers the Agnihotra sacrifice without knowing this (viz., the interiorisation of sacrifice) —that would be just as if he were to . . . pour the offering on ashes." What this statement makes explicit is that the external offerings in themselves bear no fruit. It is by interiorising sacrifice, through the ascetical meditative techniques of Yoga, that the goal is reached. Thus the function of sacrifice is interpreted anew. It is a perspective in which the physiological functions of the body, through the process of inward visualisation, are identified with the cosmic structure of sacrifice. This identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm will find its full expression both in Tantricism and Haṭhayoga.

The text of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* definitely speaks of the developed form of the practice of breath-control. With the rise of Buddhism and the Upaniṣadic thought, the mystical practices of the Vedas and of the Brāhmaṇas are interpreted anew in the context of new doctrinal developments. The aim now is to employ the mystical techniques of interiorisation not so much for the attainment of occult powers as much as for gaining access to hidden knowledge. This hidden knowledge is equated to the soteriological knowledge of liberation from the cosmic structures that are infirm and experientially pain-producing. Each school of thought, whether orthodox or heterodox, will make use of these methods of interiorisation in the context of its soteriological goal, which is to obtain once-for-all freedom from embodied existence.

Yoga in the Upaniṣads

It is not an easy task to construct a proper history of Yoga from the time of the *Ṛgveda* (1500 BC) to the time of the Buddha (560-480 BC). The discussion that has so far been carried out makes it explicit that the history of Yoga most probably has its roots in the prehistory of the Indus Civilisation. Upon the disappearance of this rich civilisation, the religious elements,

particularly the yogic ones, did not completely vanish, but were incorporated, during the Vedic times, by such groups into their religiosity that lived on the fringe of Aryan society. We know this fact from the study of the Vrātyas. The concept of *tapas*, of sacrifice and of breath-control in the Vedas is transformed into an inward liturgical offering in the Brāhmaṇas. The process of interiorisation, in due course of time, is overtaken by the idea of substitution, viz., the various physiological functions of the body are seen as substitutes for sacrifice. The Upaniṣads speak of sacrifice in general terms. The Upaniṣadic seer (*ṛṣi*) reacts strongly against the formalised structure of the Vedic sacrifice. The Upaniṣads, thus, give rise to new conceptions that are peculiar to Yoga and to its ally Sāṃkhya. The Upaniṣads emphasise the need for the cultivation of meditative techniques for the effectuation of inner purification.

Prior to the effort of locating the yogic techniques in the Upaniṣads, it is necessary at this point of discussion to discover the over-all conceptual framework of the Upaniṣads. The fundamental structure of the Upaniṣadic thought is based upon the mystical discovery of the Self's (*ātman*) identity with the Absolute (*brahman*). Those who discover this hidden knowledge of identity attain to immortality, and thereby transcend the phenomenal perishability by becoming imperishable. As the ground of existence, *brahman-ātman* serves as the substratum of every thing that is phenomenal, from the plane of ritual to that of cosmos. As the ground of existence, *brahman-ātman* is seen to be identical with speech, fire, sacrifice, etc. What is of significance is to note that *brahman-ātman* is spoken of as being immortal, imperishable (*akṣara*), and foundation of existence. Even in the *Atharvaveda*,[43] *brahman* is identified with the cosmic pillar (*skambha*), and upon this pillar stands this creation. The cosmic pillar as support represents the symbol of sustenance, and so *brahman-ātman* as the substratum of existence sustains it by being its support. It is this concept of "pillar" that would, in esoteric forms of Yoga, be seen as the *axis mundi*, and accordingly would this pillar be identified with the central vein (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*) in the body. It is through this vein that the latent power within the body is channelled upwards towards the crown of the head, which is the summit of

existence. It is this place where microcosm and the macrocosm merge into each other, and as a result of merger is experienced the bliss of the unity of Being.

Brahman, as the cosmic pillar, supports, on the one hand, everything that is phenomenal and, on the other hand, it, as the support, allows everything to become manifest. The symbolism of the pillar tells us that what sustains the world is *brahman-ātman* as the cosmic pillar.[44] It is this thinking that ultimately triumphs in the Upaniṣads. The pillar, viewed from the cosmic perspective, is in the centre of the cosmos, and so is its very Self (*ātman*): "He who knows *brahman* in man knows the Supreme Being, and he who knows the Supreme Being knows the *skambha*."[45] Since *brahman* is the support of everything, so it is by definition beyond every conceivable description.

The penetration into cosmic mystery is possible to the degree or extent the mystery of *brahman* is probed. Understanding as knowledge, thus, is understood as a sacred act, a holy force, for it is knowledge that has the power of probing the mystery not of cosmos only, but also of existence, of who we are and what our ultimate destination is. Knowledge is sacred because its acquisition bestows immortality, which means freedom from the ever-recurring cycle of rebirth, and thereby from suffering itself. It is the knowers of *brahman*[46] who uphold the world. It is the wise one (*dhīra*) who is in possession of the holy knowledge of *brahman*. As knowledge is characterised by words, so the knower of *brahman* knows the Word (*vāc*) that reveals the mystery of *brahman-ātman*.[47] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[48] refers to *brahman* as the Word (*akṣaram*).

By identifying the Self (*ātman*) with the Absolute (*brahman, skambha, akṣara*) the Upaniṣads thereby open up new vistas of understanding concerning the access to the knowledge of the Absolute. The Vedic quest ultimately finds its fulfilment in the Upaniṣads in terms of the realisation of that knowledge that leads to immortality, and thereby to non-death. It is at this point of disclosure that the Upaniṣadic seers have incorporated the meditative praxis of Yoga as one of the

essential elements into their over-all spiritual praxis. It is the employment of contemplative methods of Yoga that makes the acquisition of the holy knowledge of *brahman-ātman* possible.

The first clear indication of yogic methods is to be found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. However, the meditative path in the Upaniṣads is still related to the ritual of sacrifice. The earliest instructions concerning the meditative path in the Upaniṣads is given in the context of the horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedha*). The interpretation that is offered of this sacrifice is in terms of it being homologised to the cosmic structure. It is said that in the beginning the One split itself into two: Male and Female. When the One (*ekaṃ*) became two, the cosmos came into being. Underlying this cosmological speculation is an ethical concern. It is a concern that finds its expression in the conviction that it is sinful to cling to the multiple objects of the world on account of reality being One. It is therefore deduced that the goal of life should be the knowledge of the One. Thus Yājñavalkya continues:

> As a tree of the forest,
> Just so, surely, is man.
> His hairs are leaves,
> His skin the outer bark.
> From his skin blood,
> Sap from the bark flows forth.
> From him when pierced there comes forth
> A stream, as from the tree when struck.
> His pieces of flesh are under layers of wood,
> The fiber is muscle-like, strong;
> The bones are the wood within;
> The marrow is made resembling pith.
> A tree, when it is felled, grows up,
> From the root, more new shoot again;
> A mortal, when cut down by death—
> From what does he grow up?
> Say not from semen,
> For that is produced from the living,
> As the tree, forsooth, springing from the seed,
> Clearly arises without having died.
> If with its roots they should pull up

> The tree, it would not come into being again.
> A mortal when cut down by death—
> From what root does he grow?
> When born, indeed, he is not born again.
> Who should again beget him?
> *Brahman* is knowledge, is bliss,
> The final goal of the giver of offerings,
> Of him, too, who stands still and knows it.[49]

In the above lines the sage Yājñavalkya explicitly tells that they who cultivate the contemplative path of Yoga obtain the transcendental knowledge of *brahman-ātman*. The seer, when in trance, comes to know the undifferentiated nature of *brahman*, and as such sees *brahman* as the very substratum of existence. This knowledge of *brahman* as being the undifferentiated ground of existence results in the declaration that no distinction exists between the relative and the Absolute, and so accordingly is declared by the Upaniṣads:

> 'I am *brahman*' (*aham brahma asmi*). Although Yājñavalkya seems to be rejecting the doctrine of rebirth, yet elsewhere he says: 'They who know the life of life (*prāṇa*), the eye of the eye, the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind—they have realised the ancient, Primeval Ground-of-Being (*brahman*).'[50]

The entire thrust of reflection now is determined by the soteriological concerns, which is to obtain freedom from becoming, viz., from the cycle of rebirth (*punar-janma* or *saṃsāra*). This freedom from becoming is actualised upon knowing the essential unity between the relative and the Absolute, which also means of coming to know that one's subjectivity is of the nature of Absolute. The process of rebirth of an individual is explained through the following simile, and the simile is as follows: "Just as a leech, when it has reached the end of a blade of grass, draws itself together before making another approach (to a different blade), so this self, after having cast off the body and dispelled ignorance, draws itself together before making another approach (to a new body)."[51]

The next oldest Upaniṣad that we have is the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. In one of the passages, while explaining the meaning of the mystical syllable *Oṃ*, the following ascetical discipline is laid down: "There are three branches of duty: sacrifice, study, and alms-giving—these are the first austerity. The second is the discipleship while dwelling in the house of a teacher. Settling permanently in the house of a teacher is the third."[52] This ascetical discipline gives us the indication as to the future course of the spiritual path as well as of such seminal ideas that will be constitutive of Yoga. Later on these themes will be repeated again and again in those Upaniṣads where Yoga as a contemplative discipline will be discussed threadbare.

Along with the new formulation of spiritual discipline there is given rise to an understanding in terms of which the Absolute and the cosmos is visualised in what is called the *doctrine of honey*. The doctrine in itself is quite abstruse on account of its ambiguity. Through this doctrine an attempt is made to explain cosmology in relation to the Absolute by using the analogy of honey. Also such important terms are used that will constitute the essential aspects of yogic ideology. The doctrine is explained thus: "Verily, yonder sun is the honey of the gods. The sky is its crossbeam. The mid-region is the honeycomb. The particles of light are the brood."[53]

The sun stands for the Absolute, whereas the honey is the symbol of nectar of immortality. Similar ideas are further delineated in 3.13 where the nature of life force is explained by saying that the five functions of the life-force are as the "door-keepers of the heavenly world." It is a clear reference to the practice of breath-control. We are also informed that life-force is the basis of a living being. The fullest expression of the esoteric mysticism is found in 3.16.1: "Verily, a person is sacrifice."[54]

This new development that is ushered in this Upaniṣad makes it clear that sacrifice is seen no more as an external event; rather it is viewed in terms of an internal process or happening. It is this internalisation of sacrifice that should be seen as one of the reasons for the development of Yoga. And this view is reflected when we read: "Now, what the people

call sacrifice is really the chaste life (*brahmacarya*); for only through the chaste life (of a student) of the sacred knowledge does he who is a knower find that (Supreme Being)."[55]

The third oldest Upaniṣad that we have is the *Taittirīya* (fifth century BC). It is in this Upaniṣad that the term "yoga" has, for the first time, been used in its technical sense.[56] This Upaniṣad is very similar in its orientation to that of the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*. The thrust of the text of this Upaniṣad is towards explaining the mystical significance of the Vedic chants. The most peculiar doctrine of this Upaniṣad is that of food (*anna*). It is through the doctrine of food that attempt is made at explaining the mutual interdependence as well as interrelationship of things in the world. The chain of life is explained in the following terms: "From food, verily, creatures are produced—whatsoever (creatures) dwell on earth. Moreover, by food, in truth, they live. And in it they finally pass. . . ."[57]

The function of the yogic techniques is explained in terms of control over the sense faculties. In this context a new doctrine of the five sheaths (*pañca-kośa*) is adumbrated.[58] The doctrine of the five sheaths is used, in one way or the other, by all the schools of Yoga for establishing the existence of subtle body within the gross body. Tantricism will also make use of this theory in order to point out as to why an embodied existent suffers from five limitations. This Upaniṣad also advances further the yogic ideology in terms of its assertion that the summit of mystical experience is reached by penetrating these five bodily coverings or sheaths. The sage, when in mystical trance, declares:

> I am the mover of the tree (of the world). My fame is like mountain's peak. Exalted pure, like the sun, I am its nectar, shining treasures, wise, immortal, indestructible.[59]

After this Upaniṣad we have a number of Upaniṣads of the Middle Period—and these Upaniṣads have given prominence to yogic thinking as well as to the contemplative methods that terminate in enstasy.[60] All the Upaniṣads of this period completely delink themselves from the orthodox liturgical

ritualism. It is at this juncture of time that the oldest portions of the *Mahābhārata* began to be composed.

The first Upaniṣad of the Middle Period that openly advocates the use of yogic methods for the realisation of Supreme Truth is the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The entire yogic methodology is explained by making use of a story. A young lad, Naciketas, who, in a fit of rage, is given as a gift to Yama, the god of Death, by his father. Upon reaching the abode of Yama, the lad is desirous of knowing as to what is the nature of the Supreme Truth. Initially Yama hesitates in disclosing the secret knowledge. Yama, however, is so impressed by the inquisitive sincerity of the lad that he finally consents to disclose the secret knowledge. The Yoga that Yama discloses is called the *adyātma-yoga* or the "Yoga of self-absorption." Yama reveals the secret of the Yoga, "fire that leads to heaven."[61] It is the mystical fire that is produced through the practice of austerity (*tapas*)—and fire being the symbol of knowledge. As illumination of light dispels darkness, likewise is eliminated the darkness of ignorance by the secret knowledge of *brahman*. Accordingly is this knowledge considered as "a bridge to the supreme *brahman*."[62]

The Upaniṣad pronounces *a priori* that the supreme *brahman*, on account of its transcendent nature, is beyond the senses and the intellect. This supreme knowledge of *brahman* lies hidden in the deepest cave of the heart, which, as a symbol, tells as to how difficult it is to acquire this transcendent knowledge. The very hiddenness or the transcendent nature of knowledge denotes its hierarchical character—and this aspect of knowledge is explained thus:

> Beyond the senses are the sense-objects; beyond the sense-objects is the mind; beyond the mind is the intellect; beyond the intellect is the great self (*mahān-ātman*). Beyond the self is the Unmanifest (*avyakta*); beyond the Unmanifest is the Self (*puruṣa*); beyond the Self there is nothing: it is the summit; it is the supreme goal.[63]

The Supreme can be reached by following the path of Yoga. It is in the second part of the text in which are explained the fundamentals of the yogic path. The ethical discipline as well as other aspects of Yoga are foreshadowed thus:

Know thou the Self (*ātman*) as riding in a chariot,
The body as the chariot.
Know thou the intellect as the chariot-driver,
And mind as the reins.
The senses, they say, are horses:
The object of senses, what they range over.
Whose mind is constantly held firm
His senses are under control,
Like the good horses of a chariot-driver.
He . . . who has understanding,
Who is mindful and ever pure,
Reaches the goal
From which he is born no more.[64]

These lines make it clear that by the time of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* the yogic methods were already being made use of by the orthodoxy. The images that have been used in this Upaniṣad are yogic in intent and content. The images like the horses, the reins, etc., are directly related to the root *yuj*: to hold fast, to yoke, to harness.[65] This Upaniṣad, in another place, gives almost exactly the same definition of Yoga that is found in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. The Upaniṣad says:

This they consider as Yoga:
This firm holding back of the senses (*sthiraṃ-indriya-dhāraṇām*).[66]

Also the esoteric physiological details of the body have been described in this Upaniṣad. Tantricism would make use of these physiological details particularly in relation to the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*. The inner physiology of the body is explained thus:

There are a hundred and one arteries of the heart.
Only one of these passes up to the crown of the head.
Going by it, one goes to immortality.[67]

The esoteric yogic schools, particularly those of Tantricism and Haṭhayoga, would identify this artery that goes up to the crown of the head as being the central vein (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*) through which the serpent power (*kuṇḍalinī*) moves towards

the crown of the head. Once this power reaches its appointed spot, there ensues the experience of divine delight, which is equated with liberation. These yogic motifs have further been elaborated in one of the Upaniṣads of this period, and the Upaniṣad is the *Śevetāśvatara*. The nature of Being, according to this Upaniṣad, is characterised by the knowing subject (*bhoktṛ*), the object experienced (*bhogya-artha*), and Hara (Rudra-Śiva).[68] The Absolute as Hara is also termed as the Imperishable (*akṣara*), and as such is seen as the sustainer of creation. It is by knowing the Imperishable that the fetters of the wheel of becoming (*brahma-cakra*) fall way:

> On knowing God (*deva*) all fetters fall away; with the dwindling of the cause-of-suffering (*kleśa*), (there comes about) the discontinuation (of the cycle of) birth and death. From absorption in Him (results) the third (state); on the shedding of the body (at death) (follows) omnipotence (*viśvaiśrya*); (then one is) alone (*kevala*), desire-filled.[69]

The joy and delight that is experienced upon knowing the Absolute is obtained only if the meditative path of absorption is cultivated meticulously. The practice of the meditative absorption consists of in repeating the sacred syllable *Oṃ*. The repetition of the syllable produces a kind of friction (*nirmanthana*) within. Further the Upaniṣad gives us a detailed account of various yogic techniques. It is in this Upaniṣad that, for the first time, systematic account of techniques is given, and which can be discerned from the following lines:

> Holding the body steady with the three (upper parts: chest, neck and head) erect, keeping the senses and the mind in the heart, the man, with the boat of *brahman*, should cross the streams that cause fear.
> Breathe one should, through the nostrils, with diminished breath. The wise man should restrain the mind undistractedly as (he would) the chariot yoked with vicious horses.
> In a cean and level spot, which is free from pebbles, fire and gravel, with pleasant sounds, water and similar (features) favourable, but not offensive to the eye, and which is hidden and free from wind—there alone one should practice Yoga.
> Fog, smoke, sun, fire, wind, fire-flies, lightning, crystal and moon—these are preliminary appearances which effect the manifestation of *brahman* in Yoga.

> When the fivefold characteristics of Yoga have appeared, besides the manifestation of earth, water, fire, air and space, there is no longer sickness, old age and death for him who has obtained a body made of the fire of Yoga.
> Lightness, healthiness, steadiness, clearness of countenance, pleasant of voice, sweetness of odour, minimal urine and faeces—these, they say, are the frst results in the progress of Yoga.[70]

The above lines point out clearly that by the time of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* the yogic techniques of meditation had gained wide acceptance among the orthodoxy. The main limbs (*aṅga*) of Yoga, like the posture, breathing and the withdrawal of the senses, have been accorded due importance in this Upaniṣad. The mystical as well as the experimental aspects of Yoga have well been delineated in the description of such phenomena as lightning, fog, smoke, etc.

Since yogic techniques seem to have gained popularity among the people in general, it is but natural that in the Upaniṣads that are subsequent to the *Śvetāśvatara* attention will be given to contemplative meditation—and this we find explicitly reflected in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*. The elaborate discussion is found in the sixth chapter of this Upaniṣad. The discussion, which is focussed on the nature of yogic praxis, is based upon an earlier tradition, whch is attested by the assertion: "For it is said elsewhere." The Upaniṣad knows the five limbs of Yoga. However, no mention is made of the first three limbs, namely, of *yama*, *niyama* and *āsana*. It is possible that these three limbs have been consciously omitted on account of their general nature. A new element, which is not found in the *Yogasūtra*, has found a place in this Upaniṣad, and it is "reflection" (*tarka*). Perhaps it is identical with that form of enstasy (*samādhi*) which in the *Yogasūtra* has been termed as determinate enstasy (*samprajñatā-samādhi*).

> This is the manner of setting about (to realise) that (singleness of the One: *ekasya ekatvaṃ*); control of the life-force, sense withdrawal, meditative absorption, concentration, reasoned reflection (*tarka*) and enstasy (*samādhi*)—this is called the six-member Yoga.[71]

The goal that the Upaniṣad sets for a Yogī is the realisation of the bliss of the Supreme Lord (*īśa*), who is both the creator

and sustainer of creation. The access to the Lord can be gained by practising a special kind of yogic technique, which ultimately finds its fulfilment in the *khecarī-mudrā:* "By pressing the tip of the tongue against the palate, by restraining voice, mind and breath one perceives *brahman* through reasoned reflection (*tarka*). . . ."[72]

Another technique of absorption is immediately given at the end of the above verse. The technique is explained thus:

> When, after the disappearance of the mind, one perceives through the self the resplendent Self, which is more minute than the smallest, one becomes selfless after having seen the Self through the Self.[73]

There is also an explanation given in this Upaniṣad about the mystical importance of the gracious vein (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*). It is said that this particular vein serves as a conduit for the life-force. The vein helps in effecting, through the exercise of breath-control, the deep meditative self-absorption, and as a consequence of this is attained the state of "isolation" (*kevalatva*).[74]

The text also speaks about the Yoga of Sound (*nāda-yoga*). The basis of this Yoga is characterised by an orientation in which meditation on the syllable *Oṃ* is given primary importance. It is believed that a persistent meditation upon the syllable not only gives rise to the experience of *brahman*,[75] but also terminates in the actualisation of soteric freedom from the fetters of bondage.[76] The process of meditation on the syllable *Oṃ* is explained thus:

> Thus because (the Yogī) joins the life-force, the syllable *Oṃ* and all the manifold (phenomena of the universe), or is joined (by them)—therefore this is called Yoga. The singleness of the life-force, the mind and the senses and the abandonment of all levels-of-existence is called Yoga.[77]

There is even an attempt at explaining the technique of meditation both in terms of the "word" and the "non-word." The emphasis given to the word and the non-word forms of meditation shows the influence of the auditory forms of mystical experiences:

> By closing the ears with the thumbs, they hear the sound of the space within the heart. Of this there is this sevenfold comparison; like rivers, a bell, a brazen vessel, a wheel, the croaking of frogs, rain and when one speaks in a sheltered place. Passing beyond this . . . (sound-*brahman*), men disappear in the Supreme, the non-sound, the umnanifest *brahman*. There they are unqualified, indistinguishable, like the various juices that have reached the condition of honey.[78]

Another Upaniṣad of this period that should be taken into consideration is the *Māṇḍūkya*. It is in this Upaniṣad that, for the first time, the states of consciousness are analysed, which, in the context of Yoga, play an important role insofar as transcending the empirical modes of consciousness are concerned. It is upon transcending the first three states of consciousness, which are those of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, that the Fourth is realised, which is identified with the state in which is disclosed the hidden knowledge of identity. Keeping the importance of the states of consciousness in view in relation to Yoga, it is but natural that those who follow the path of Yoga will take this Upaniṣad very seriously. The very first verse of this Upaniṣad begins with the proclamation that the syllable *Oṃ* "is the Whole," viz., it is identified with *brahman-ātman*. The four states of consciousness—the first three being empirical and the Fourth representing the transcendent—have been homologised with the letters of the syllable *Oṃ* as well as with the four quarters. The analysis of the states of consciousness is further carried out by the *Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad*.[79] The text maintains that whatever is experienced in the first three states of consciousness is not different from *brahman-ātman*. Liberation however is gained upon transcending these three states of consciousness in terms of reaching the Fourth (*turya*). It is a state that is identical with the indeterminate state of consciousness (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*).

Concluding Remarks

From our discussion so far concerning the early history of Yoga it has somewhat become clear that the true historical beginning of Yoga is difficult to trace, as every kind of evidence of historical importance seems to have disappeared in the ambiguous mists of antiquity. It however is clear, from all the

scattered evidences, that the Indian society, by and large, is composed of two main traditions—Aryan and non-Aryan. It is the encounter between these two traditions that has resulted in a new synthesis, and one of the outcomes of this synthesis is the emergence of Yoga.

The early religious mode of life of the Aryans is reflected in the Vedic literature. It is a mode of life that is constituted by such religiosity that is scarifice-oriented both in intent and content. It is sacrifice that forms the central core of the early Aryan society.

The Aryans, however hard they might have tried, could not keep themselves away from the influences from other segments of society. They were bound to come in contact, which they did, with groups of people who were indigenous or who lived on the fringe of Aryan society. It is by encountering such groups of people that the Vedic Aryans received many such influences that later on became the basis for the yogic ideology and praxis. The cross-fertilisation of two ways of life may be traced in the longhaired (*keśin*) ascetic of the *Ṛgveda*. It is the figure of the longhaired ascetic that seems to have influenced the religious practices of the orthodox Aryan community. It is this non-Aryan influence upon the Aryans that should be seen as the source of such ascetical concepts as, for example, *tapas*. The *Atharvaveda* reflects a new departure, as non-Aryan religious influences become more and more marked and pronounced. The story of the Vrātyas confirms this standpoint.

The outside influences completely seem to have changed the Aryan outlook with regard to sacrifice. Sacrifice is not merely seen as a means of appeasing the gods; rather it is both a means of appeasement as well as the symbol of asceticism. This understanding of sacrifice is clearly reflected in the Brāhmaṇas as well as in the early Upaniṣads. The various physiological functions of the body, which have a direct bearing upon the yogic praxis, are being identified with the sacrifice. Of particular interest is the identification of breath-control with sacrifice. This orientation is found in such Upaniṣads that have been composed between 500-300 BC or what may be called the Middle Period.

The yogic techniques are now frequently and openly talked about. The yogic techniques are seen as essential means for realising the soteric goal of liberation in terms of attaining to the state of transconsciousness. It is the attainment of the state of the Fourth (*turya*) that terminates in the deliverance of a Yogī from all levels of empirical existence. In transcending the empirical mode of existence, the Yogī perceives or cognises *brhaman* as being identical with his subjectivity, which is *ātman*. It is through knowledge that soteric freedom is realised. The aim of Yoga is clear, which is: deliverance from the wheel of existence (*bhava-cakra*). Thus the Upaniṣads have paved the way for the proper development of Yoga. The final fructification of Yoga took place when Patañjali composed his magnum opus, namely, the *Yogasūtra*.[80]

REFERENCES

1. There have been made many attempts in the past to explain the origins of Yoga in terms of shamanism. W. Ruben in this regard made the earliest attempt. He believed that the shamanistic notion of ascent to heaven (*himmelereise*) is at the back of entire yogic ideology. He further suggested that the yogic contemplation as well as the experiences of the various altered states of consciousness is analogous to the shaman's ascent to heaven. He set these ideas in his "Shamanismus in alten Indien," *Acta Orientalia*, 18, pp. 164-205. This hypothesis of Ruben seems to be based more upon conjuncture than upon solid facts. Even if some aspects of shamanism resemble certain facets of Yoga, it does not thereby prove that Yoga necessarily originated from Central Asian shamanism. It may be interesting to say that Yoga has its source in the shamanism of Central Asia, but it is quite different to explain the essence of these beliefs—and on this front Ruben has completely failed.

   There is another theory that believes that Yoga originated among the Dravidian people. Further it is said that the Dravidian people developed the Indus Civilisation. However, there are hardly any sound proofs that could be considered as being credible. See H. Zimmer, *Kunstform und Yoga im indischen Kultbild*, Berlin, 1926; *Philosophies of India*, London, 1951; A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, New York, 1954; M. Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, New York, 1958; *Shamanism: Techniques of Ecstasy*, London, 1964.
2. The archaic character of Yoga is itself testified by the sacred texts of India. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 4.3.

3. As far as the definite historical traces of Yoga are concerned, they, with some degree of certainty, can be found in the earliest sacred literature of the Aryans, namely, the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*. Cf. M. Falk, *The Unknown Early Yoga and the Birth of Indian Philosophy*, Madras, n.d.
4. Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-Daro and Indus Civilisation*, 3 vols., London, 1931; M. Eliade, op. cit.
5. Marshall, op. cit., 1.7.
6. Ibid., p. 52. Interestingly Marshall interprets the figure of the so-called Yogī thus: "It (the figure) represents someone seemingly in the pose of a Yogī, and it is for this reason that the eyelids are more than half closed and the eyes looking downward to the nose . . . probably it is the statue of a priest, may be a king-priest, since it lacks the horns which would naturally be expected if it were a figure of the deity himself. That it possessed a religious or quasi-religious character is suggested by the distinctive trefoil patterning of its robe—a motif which in Sumer is reserved for objects of social nature." Ibid., pl. xcviii.
7. Stuart Piggot, *Pre-historic India*, London, 1950, p. 202.
8. The theory of historical continuity is based on the assumption that the Aryans were not culturally as advanced as were the people of the Indus, which also means their lack of sophistication in matters of techniques of ecstasy. Accordingly has been given rise to a belief that such religious elements of Brāhmaṇism that do not conform to Vedism must have originated from a milieu that was through and through non-Aryan. It is this conviction that drove, for example, Marshall to say that "Like Śaivism, Yoga has its origin among the pre-Aryan population, and this explains why it was not until the Epic Period that it came to play an important role in Indo-Aryan religion." Op. cit., p. 54.
9. See Agehananda Bharati, "Śākta and Vajrayāna: Their Place in Indian Thouhgt," in: *Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantricism*, Koyasa, 1965.
10. There are many hymns in the *Ṛgveda* that foreshadow much of Yoga ideology and praxis. The *keśinsūkta's* (10.136) description of the ascetic foreshadows the traits of a Yogī. It is a hymn that is given to the eulogisation of asceticism, and thereby of the ascetic. In the *Ṛgveda* (10.72) a term has been used to describe the ascetical praxis of an ascetic, and the term is *uttānapāda*, meaning "one whose feet are turned upwards." It is a term that reminds one of a yogic posture called the *uttānacaraṇa*. Cf. *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 3.198.
11. There are several hymns in the *Atharvaveda* that depict a kind of proto-Yoga and Sāṁkhya. See *Atharvaveda*, 2.1; 4.1; 5.1; 7.5; 10.7; 11.4, 5, 15.
12. See, for example, *Ṛgveda*, 10.129. In this hymn of creation (*nāsadīya-sūkta*) such ontological speculations are made that reflect some of the Sāṁkhya conceptions.

13. *Ṛgveda,* 10.136. This hymn not only describes the character of the ascetic, but also explains the complex nature of ecstatic experiences.

> Longhair holds fire, holds the drug, holds heaven and earth.
> Longhair opens everything under the sun, longhair declares it light.
> These sages, swathed in wind, put dirty red tatters on.
> When gods get in them, they ride with the rush of the wind.
> "Ecstatic with wisdom, we have lifted ourselves to the wind.
> Our bodies are all you mere mortals can see."
> He sails through the air, seeing appearance spread out below.
> The sage, this god and his friend, friendly to all that's well done.
> The stallion of wind, companion of gales, and lashed on by gods—
> the sage.
> He is home by two seas, the waters east and those of the west.
> He moves in the motion of heavenly girls and youths, of beasts in
> the woods.
> Longhair, reading their minds, is their sweet and most pleasing
> companion.
> The wind has stirred it, Kunamnama prepared it for him.
> Longhaired drinks from the cup, sharing the drug with Rudra.

14. *Ṛgveda,* 10.136.
15. *Yogasūtra,* 3.20-24, 26, 28-29.
16. Cf. *Sāmaññaphalasutta,* 87ff.; *Dīghanikāya,* 1.87; *Majjhimanikāya,* 1.34; *Mahābhārata,* 22.332.2.
17. The Siddha, the accomplished one, is conceived as the one who is gifted with the vision of wisdom (*dhīra*), and is seen in possession of special occult powers in virtue of him having realised the non-empirical mode of consciousness, also called the state of the Fourth (*turya*). When the mind is "concentrated, purified, clear, spotless, receptive, steady," then a person is termed as being a Siddha. It is the deep concentration as well as the purity of the mind that terminates in the acquirement of occult powers (cf. *Dīghanikāya,* 2.83), and as such he has the power of entering another body (*para-śarīrāveśa*). This power is obtained through the practice of Yoga. Thus says the *Yogasūtra* (3.38): "When the cause of bondage is loosened and when this procedure is cognised, the mind enters another body." Cf. *Mahābhārata,* 13.40-41.
18. *Atharvaveda,* 11.5.5; 15.7.1.
19. See M. Eliade, op. cit.
20. Cf. J.W. Hauer, *Der Vrātyas,* Stuttgart, 1927; J.C. Hesterman, "Vrātya and Sacrifice," in *Indo-Iranian Journal,* 6, pp. 1-37.
21. *Atharvaveda,* 15.15.2.
22. Ibid., 15.2; *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmana,* 2.40, 4ff.; *Āpastamba Śrauta-sūtra,* 21.17.18.
23. *Sāṃkhyāyana Śrautasutra,* 17; Hauer, op. cit., pp. 258 ff.

24. Marshall, op. cit., 1.64.
25. The concept of *tapas* is closely related to the idea of an abstinent (*brahmacārin*). In later Hinduism it denoted one of the stages of life of an orthodox Hindu. Thus *brahmacarya* came to be understood in terms of sexual abstinence. In this manner sexual abstinence is transformed into an ascetical practice (*tapas*). The Upaniṣads maintain that *brahman* is reached by them that practice truth (*satyam*), sexual abstinence (*brahmacarya*), and asceticism (*tapas*). See J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, The Hague, 1965; M. Hara, "Transfer of Merit," in: *Adyar Library Bulletin*, 31-32, pp. 382-411.
26. *Ṛgveda*, 1.109; 8.58.6; 136.2.
27. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 5.32.1.
28. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 2.2.9.
29. *Yogasūtra*, 2.1, 32, 34, 43; 4.1.
30. *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, 3.3.1; see also *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, 33.5.
31. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, 4.1.24; cf. *Atharvaveda*, 15.15-18.
32. *Ṛgveda*, 3.32.12.
33. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 8.6.1.10.
34. *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, 8.4.2.1.
35. The story of Prajāpati is as follows: While fashioning the world, Prajāpati's limbs fell apart. To remake Prajāpati, the gods reassembled his limbs, and thereby remade, through the power of austerity of sacrifice, Prajāpati. See A. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York, 1943, pp. 19ff.
36. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.3; cf. A.B. Keith, *The Ṛgveda Brāhmaṇa*, Cambridge, Mass., 1920, pp. 108-9.
37. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10.5.4.16.
38. *The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.7) considers liturgical methods as not being a safe salvific boat.
39. *Ṛgveda*, 10.167.1.
40. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 3.12.3.
41. *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, 2.5.
42. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 5.19-24.
43. *Atharvaveda*, 10.7.8.
44. Ibid., 10.8.2.
45. Ibid., 10.7.17.
46. *Mahābhārata*, 13.151.3.
47. *Ṛgveda*, 10.125.5; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.8.10.
48. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.9.28.
49. Ibid., 4.4.18.
50. Ibid., 4.4.3.
51. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 2.23.1.
52. Ibid., 3.1.
53. Ibid., 3.13; cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.5.23.
54. Ibid., 3.16.1.
55. Ibid., 8.5.1; 8.15.

56. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4: *Yoga ātma;* cf. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.12.
57. Ibid., 2.21.
58. Ibid., 2.4.1.
59. Ibid., 1.10.
60. The Upaniṣads of the Middle Period are the *Kaṭha, Śvetāśvatara, Īśa, Muṇḍaka,* and the *Māṇḍūkya.*
61. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.14ff.
62. Ibid., 3.2.
63. Ibid., 1.3, 10-11.
64. Ibid., 3.3.4.
65. *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, 2.6.
66. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.3.11. The *Yogasūtra* (1.2) defines Yoga as "a method of eliminating the operations of the mind."
67. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 6.16.
68. The Absolute is spoken of variously. It has been identified with Śiva, with Rudra, and with Bhāgavat, ibid., 1.10; 3.11; 6.12.
69. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.11.
70. Ibid., 2.8, 14; cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6.11-14: "Setting up a steady seat for himself in a pure place, neither too high nor too low, with a cloth, deer-skin or grass upon it, there making the mind one-pointed, restraining the activity of mind and senses, he should, seated on the seat, yoke (himself) in Yoga for the purification of the self. Equable (*sama*), keeping trunk, head and neck motionless and steady, gazing at the tip of the nose, without looking round about him, with tranquil self, devoid of fear, steadfast in the vow of chastity, controlling the mind, his thoughts on Me, yoked—he should sit intent on Me."
71. *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.
72. Ibid., 5.20.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., 6.21.
75. Ibid., 6.24. See 6.5 where the syllable *Oṃ* has been identified with the gods, with the sacrifice and with breathing.
76. Ibid., 6.22.
77. Ibid., 6.25.
78. Ibid., 6.24.
79. *Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad*, 11.12; cf. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 1.9-12.
80. The *Yogasūtra*, for the first time, codified such techniques of meditation that Patañjali thought to be valuable. He, however, is not the inventor of yogic techniques. As a competent editor, he has put the yogic techniques within a proper ideological framework.

2

The Soteriological Context of Yoga

THE TEXT OF ANY HUMAN discourse does not operate in an historical vacuum. It is the historical context that is responsible in determining the essential nuances of any discourse at a particular historical period. It is the prevailing condition, whether social or economic, that should be seen as the context of the text of the discourse that emerges in a given historical situation. Keeping this perspective in view, we can say that the yogic theory and praxis too must have arisen due such historical circumstances that necessitated its arising. As a religious ideology, it would be nothing else but the soteriological concern that should be seen as the main driving-force for determining the theoretical and practical content of what has come to be known as Yoga. It is upon knowing the soteriological context that the proper text of Yoga can both be appreciated and understood.

The Meaning of the Term

The term *yoga* has its own history. As language evolves, so the meaning of the term *yoga*, too, has evolved, which means that, at different historical periods, it has expressed itself in relation to what the existing historical situation has been. It is the historical context that situates the meaning of a term. This view of language as being subject to the process of evolution would mean that language is not static, but is continuously undergoing change. And this change in the formation of word-meaning of language is initiated by the historical situation. It means that the level of thought, as contained in the meaning

of the words, expresses as to what kind of historical condition is prevailing. Similarly is the case with our term. In applying this rule to our term, we can say that, in the process of evolution, the meaning of the term has been different at different periods of time.

The earliest use of the term *yoga* is found in the *Ṛgveda*, which represents the earliest expression of how the Aryans reflected concerning the problems of life in the world. The composition of this text belongs to that period of history when human thinking was either naturalistic or mythic. When we say that the text of the *Ṛgveda* is characterised by the naturalistic way of looking at life, we mean by it that the early Aryans encountered Nature in such a manner as would result in determining the course of their lives either for good or bad. If there occurred some natural calamity, for example, in the form of floods, there then would eventuate an experience that would be painful. If, on the other hand, there were increase in cattle, the experience would be that of joy. It is such-like down-to-earth experiences that definitely determined their attitude towards Nature and its forces. All the human happenings, whether good or bad, were ascribed to the forces of Nature. In doing so the Aryans thereby had an anthropomorphic view of the forces of Nature, which accordingly resulted in their personification. It is around these personified forces of Nature that the Vedic religiosity took its birth. Lacking the analytical tools of analysis, the only way of approaching these forces of Nature was that of myth. And it is in terms of myth that the Aryans have tried to relate themselves to these forces of Nature.

If this is the case, then we have no hesitation in saying that the Vedic religion, by and large, was characterised by mythic thinking. As the Vedic thinking was mythic, so it viewed reality both realistically and holistically. In order to make this vision of reality a realisable goal, the Aryans had to invent such a mythic method whereby the auspicious presence of reality could be realised—and so the most appropriate mythic method that could be used towards this end was that of sacrifice. The holistic vision that the Vedic religion has of reality is interpreted in terms of looking at the phenomenal events as

being its manifestation. The so-called personified natural forces have not so much been viewed as being autonomous entities as much as the manifestation, in terms of natural events, of the Whole. The Vedic religion desired to gain access to the manifest forces as events by such ritual means that would be constitutive of sacrifice—and this ritualisation of sacrifice later on became the foundation of Tantric yogic methods. This understanding of Vedic religion becomes quite explicit particularly in the context of austerity (*tapas*) and such ritualised techniques of meditation that have a direct relationship with sacrifice.

As it is the context that inserts meanings in words that we speak in order to communicate, so it is but natural to find out the contextual use of the term "yoga" in the earliest literary work of the Aryans, namely, the *Ṛgveda*. In the *Ṛgveda* the term has been used in relation to its root meaning. The term is derived from the root *yuj*, meaning "to yoke," "to harness," "to bind together," etc. The early Aryans used the term in such a manner as would establish its deep connection with austerity. For them the term denoted such methods whereby the senses could be restrained for the purpose of actualising the possibility of appropriating the numinous forces that permeate the universe. This very understanding of the term as a means of applying the brake of restraint upon the senses indicates its ascetical content. It is through the ascetical methods that an ascetic gains the power of establishing his sway over his senses by not allowing them to function in terms of their nature. The practices of austerity, in the Vedic context, functioned at the level of ritualised sacrifice. The desire to appropriate or assimilate the numinous forces as presence in the phenomena explains the primordial urge of returning to the source or womb (*yoni*) by rejoining (*saṃyoga*) the Origin. It is this innate desire of man of going back to the Origin that found its expression, under the influence of Vedāntic thought, in some of the post-Patañjali schools of Yoga, and particularly in Tantricism. Accordingly we are informed that Yoga is "a process whereby the individual self is joined with the Supreme Self."[1] Or again: "Yoga is the integration of the individual self."[2]

In whatever way the meaning of the term may have been understood or made use of, the underlying idea has always been that Yoga is a process that facilitates self-integration. It is this view or understanding of Yoga that has been widely accepted by people. Even the dualistic schools of thought, particularly such schools that are bhakti-oriented, have also understood Yoga as a means of self-integration. Although the classical Yoga of Patañjali, also spoken of as Rājayoga, believes that the state of "isolation" (*kaivalyaṃ*) is the ultimate goal of Yoga proper, even then it too thinks that the attainment of the transcendent state of aloofness is possible only through self-integration.

The classical treatise on Yoga, namely, the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, defines Yoga as "a method of suppressing the operations of the mind."[3] The suppression, or rather elimination, of the operations of the mind is a point of departure for a true Yogī. A mind that is free from the flow of thought and from the flow of sense-based experiences is equated with the state of utter peace. It is upon the negation of the natural functioning of the mind that the stillness of peace is experienced. This state of peace may be linked to the utter tranquillity that the solitude of a desert offers. It is the peace of loneliness, or should we say, of aloofness. In this state the capacity to relate becomes non-functional, which means that the ascetic sinks into the inner solitude of abstraction. As a result of this self-absorption (*samāveśa*), affliction (*kleśa*) of any kind does not arise—and the state of non-affliction is the embodiment of utter peace.[4]

A Yogī[5] who is successful in suppressing the operations of the mind, according to Patañjali, "shines forth in his own-being."[6] In other words, a Yogī, by achieving the state of self-integration through the suppression of the operations of the mind, gains insight into the essential nature of his own Self, which otherwise is beyond the grasp of the senses and the intellect. The essential nature of the Self is that of pure awareness. A Yogī that has attained self-integration realises that the Self as pure awareness is constitutive of his essential nature. Everything apart from the Self is seen to be transient, ephemeral and full of afflictions.

The very attempt at suppressing the flow of thought or sense-based experiences of the mind indicates the actual orientation of Yoga, which is that of dissociation (*viyogaḥ*). As the natural tendency of the mind is to relate itself, either through thinking or through sense-based experiences, to the sensible, this very intention of the mind of relating itself to the other is seen as the root of the problem, which is that of suffering. We all know that it is through the senses that the mind is enabled to relate itself to the outside world. The perceptions that we have, through the senses, of the world is transformed into knowledge, and knowledge arises when the perceptions, through the faculty of understanding, become knowledge in the form of thoughts. This knowledge of the world, which is the product of the intellect and of perception, is, according to the yogic thinking, troublesome and painful. It is so because, in the process of association with the object or sense experience, the mind loses its autonomy in terms of becoming subservient to anything that is outside. In order to free the mind from this slavery, it is necessary that it should disentangle itself, through dissociation, from the very process of relating. It is through the yogic methods of dissociation that the umbilical cord of relationship between the mind and the world is cut asunder by introverting consciousness. Inwardness of consciousness is successfully effected when the sensations are not allowed to enter, through the sense organs, into the chamber of the mind. It would, thus, not be wrong to say that Yoga is basically a method of dissociation.[7]

It is by going inward, and by withdrawing the senses from their respective fields of activity, that a complete rupture with the outside world is actualised. It is upon the sinking of consciousness into the inner cave of interiority that the Yogī, through the faculty of intuitive wisdom (*prajñā*), which is non-conceptual and also free from the impact of the senses, is enabled to make necessary discrimination between the Self and the non-self. The Yogī withdraws, step by step, from the non-self, which belongs to the realm of Nature (*prakṛti*), and accordingly frees himself from the impact of objects that have a name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*). The withdrawal is not only related to the world outside, but also to the body, which, as it

were, is the centre of gravity for extroverted consciousness. The extroverted consciousness in the state of extroversion remains unaware of its actual nature—and thus unawareness of not knowing its essential nature is called ignorance (*avidyā*). So it is ignorance that terminates in the misidentification of consciousness with the psychosomatic complex. As a result of this misidentification the individual has no hesitation in giving in to such expressions as, for exmple, "I am fat," "I am thin," etc. Once the process of withdrawal has been perfected in terms of establishing consciousness in its own nature through inwardness, there then arises the intuitive knowledge of the Self as pure awareness or witness (*sākṣin*). This discovery of the Self as pure witness constitutes the essential nature or own-form (*svarūpa*) of the individual. This discovery of the Self has been interpreted either in terms of the Vedāntic principle of identity or in dualistic terms of Sāṁkhya-Yoga or in terms of love-relationship of Bhakti tradition. If interpreted in terms of the Vedāntic principle of identity, then the Yogī can sing the following with Śaṃkara:

> *Oṃ.* I am not reason, intuition (*buddhi*), egoity (*ahaṃkāra*), or memory; neither hearing, tasting, smelling or sight; neither ether nor earth, fire or air. I am Śiva in the form of Consciousness-Bliss. I am Śiva! I am Śiva![8]

If the soteriological goal is seen in terms of "isolation" (*kaivalya*), then the thrust of the yogic praxis would be characterised by such ascetical practices and meditative methods which, on the one hand, effect complete dissociation of the Self (*puruṣa*) from the non-self (viz., from the unintelligent matter, *jaḍa prakṛti*) and, on the other hand, lead to the experience of self-integration as isolation. The yogic ascetical praxis has its fulfilment when the bond of relationship with matter is completely destroyed. The persistence of this relationship would mean the perpetuation of the bondage of unfreedom. It is in delinking the Self from matter that not only freedom from the limitations of space-time structure is achieved, but also is realised freedom from the ever-recurring cycle of rebirth. It is by isolating or detaching the Self, through yogic methods from the limiting factors of matter, of

temporality, of finitude that real autonomy is realised. This autonomy of freedom is actualised when the Self is held together (*saṃyoga*). The holding together of the Self is realised when the entire range of the operations of the mind is stilled.[9]

It is in and through the ascetical praxis of Yoga in which Indian spirituality has found its ultimate and appropriate expression. It is so because Indian thought, whether philosophical or theological, looks at embodied existence as a kind of burden that has to be abandoned. As life in the world by and large is characterised by experiences that are ephemeral, so it is natural to engage in search of such a mode of existence that is free from pain, from the terror of finitude, and from the transiency of phenomenality. It is Yoga more as a praxis than theoria that seems to have provided the necessary wherewithal to the Indian mind for the kind of experience it has been seeking and looking for. The experience for non-painful and unconditioned existence has been made possible by Yoga through the systematisation of such ascetical practices and meditational methods that enable a Yogī to "eliminate the modifications of the mind." Upon suppressing the modifications of the mind, the Yogī undergoes a kind of symbolic death in terms of which he takes a new birth as a new being that pertains to the supersensuous realm. The death to the old nature and the emergence of a new one is realised not only theoretically, but also experimentally. It is this experimental realisation of new being that frees a Yogī from birth, sickness, bodily decrepitude and death, which are the characteristic features of natural man. It is what Yoga seeks and aims.[10]

The Goal of Yoga

The analysis that the Indians have carried out concerning the world and life in the world is not very flattering. Some critics have charged unnecessarily that Indians are basically fatalists because of their religious beliefs. One of the reasons or sources of this fatalism is said to be the doctrine of karman and of rebirth. It is asserted that people loose zest for life because of their belief that whatever is destined cannot be changed or altered for the better. As the course of life is unchangeable, so

why at all make an effort at altering it. This pessimistic attitude towards life has resulted in the unnecessary oppression and pain that the toiling masses, under the yoke of poverty and ill health, have to undergo. The Indians are not against social or economic betterment. Their search is far deeper and serious than the attainment of immediate material prosperity. The aim or goal is to search for such a meaning of life or mode of existence in which lacks and absences are completely absent. As the very nature of existence in the world is transient, so the goods or experiences of the transient world are going to be transient too. That which is transient is going to turn into a lack when it is devoured by finitude. There is, thus, no point to seek satisfaction in that which, upon its disappearance, is going to be the source of dissatisfaction. It is this vision that has been the foundation of Indian spirituality.

The fundamental goal of each Indian school of thought, of every religious doctrine and meditational method has been *ab initio* to free each individual being from the temporal and the conditioned structures of phenomenality. It is a vision that aims at rediscovering an autonomous mode of existence that is radically different from the conditioned and space-time bound existence. Whether it is Yoga, Sāṃkhya or the different schools of Vedānta—all of them, in their respective ways, endeavour to liberate an individual existent from the continuum of limitations of space and time. One of the features of space-time continuum is the ephemerality of the phenomenal, which means that nothing is lasting. To be ephemeral means impermanence, and impermanence expresses itself in terms of becoming. A thing that is born undergoes continuous change, and change signifies the destruction of the preceding state of the object that undergoes change. It is upon the destruction of the state that has been destroyed that there emerges a new state. It is this continuous destruction and emergence that is what characterises phenomenal becoming.

Since this phenomenal becoming is painful, so the Indian spirituality aims at liberating an individual from the becoming-process in terms of situating him in a state that is stable and unchanging. It is the realisation of the unchanging state that is equated with ultimate autonomy or freedom. The autonomy

from space-time finitude is gained by situating, through the methods of meditation, the extroverted consciousness in the state that is transconscious. It is the aim of Yoga to show the practical way of transcendence, viz., a way in terms of which is transcended space-time phenomenality. Transcendence of extroverted consciousness is seen in terms of realising the essential nature of existence. To put the matter in terms of Yoga, it means that the transcendental ground of existence, which is the Self, is cognised intuitively as being of the nature of pure awareness, which means that the Self, viz., the core of existence, is beyond the fleeting world of becoming. It is a point of view which Vidyāraṇya, the fifteenth century Vedāntic philosopher, has aptly explained in the following words:

> When the notion of the individual self (*jīva*) and the notion of the universe are eradicated, then there remains only the innate Self (*sva-ātman*).[11]

Or again:

> When the seeds of bondage have been destroyed by his (viz., the Yogī's) being uncoloured even by the pure mind, there will be freedom. Freedom is the counter-product when the qualities of Nature are devoid of purpose for the real man, or (when) the power of consciousness stands firm in its own nature.[12]

The Indian sacred literature, whether Hindu, Jaina or Buddhist, is of the view that the profane structures of the world (*loka*) are not only of inferior quality, but are also, due to their temporality, tragic in character.[13] The thing that lasts not ends up in giving rise to circulatory experiences that are pain-giving. In contrast to the profane world of pain, there is an another realm that is transcendent to what is experienced empirically because of it being luminous, free from pain and affliction. Accordingly we are advised to seek this unconditioned transcendent realm of peace and non-temporality. As non-temporal, this realm is spoken of as being eternal and immortal. It is this immortal realm that is seen as the ontological ground of existence. As such it is Reality par excellence, and so is spoken of graphically as being beyond the sun and the

moon, beyond the mind and thought—and so may be equated with St. Anselm's concept of God as being that than which nothing greater can be thought. As Absolute is such a reality than which nothing greater can be thought, so it is not possible to explain or express in words or through concepts as to what the nature of it is. It is this view of the Absolute that Kant affirmed through his insight, which is: We know things as they appear and not as they are in themselves. Rightly, thus, is affirmed the transcendent character of the Absolute in terms of its unknowability, because "there the eye does not extend, no speech, nor the mind."[14] It is not only the Absolute that is unknowable, but also the things that we perceive through the senses. We know things as they appear and not as they are in themselves.

If the Absolute is the ground of phenomenal existence, it means that the essential nature (*svabhāva, svarūpa*) of both must necessarily be identical. If it is assumed that their natures are dissimilar, then it is false to say that the Absolute could be the ground of that that has a contrary nature. And St. Gregory of Palmas best expresses this view through his aphorism: God became man in order to make man God. It is this vision that permeates most of the Indian spiritual expressions—and the vision is that the Creator and the create are essentially identical. This identity of the Creator and the create is beautifully depicted in the theological concept of imago Dei, viz., that the existent is but the image of God. The goal of life, in the context of this over-arching thinking, is reached when the Self is realised as being pure awareness, and so non-different from Being. The Yoga system, however, has envisaged its soteriology not in terms of the attainment of identity, but in terms of "isolation".[15] In contrast to the yogic aloofness of the Self, the non-dualistic forms of spirituality think of the soteric goal in terms of awakening to the fact that the immanent Subject is non-different from the transcendent Absolute.[16] As far as the *bhakti* forms of spirituality are concerned, they maintain that the realisation of Being is characterised by the intimacy of loving communion.[17]

The Yoga system of Patañjali, while following the thinking of Sāṃkhya system, does not adhere to the philosophical

notion of the unity of Being. It believes in the reality of the plurality of selves. It thus differs radically from the non-dualism of Vedānta, in that Yoga represents realism, whereas Vedānta is the embodiment of idealism. However, Yoga is one with Vedānta in so far as is maintained that the realisation of the pre-temporal Origin is possible only by turning extroverted consciousness inwards through the methods of meditation and of asceticism. These methods and practices enable a Yogī to turn away from that to which extroverted consciousness relates itself, which is nothing but the world outside. The inwardness of consciousness deepens to the extent a Yogī takes flight from the world outside of consciousness. The withdrawal from the world is a pre-condition for a proper yogic life, as the profane structures outside consciousness are seen to be permeated by such negative forces that are hostile and evil. Delinking from the negativity of profane structures means to return to the Origin, viz., to the Self. A Yogī reaches his goal when he realises the Self in its purity. Therefore:

> . . . having no interest of any kind even in intellection, on account of discrimination-knowledge, there is the contemplation called cloud of rectitude. From that follows the retirement of the sources of trouble (*kleśa*) and karman.[18]

Freedom from the profane structures of temporality is sought because of them being the cause of painful experiences. It is the very orientation of extroverted consciousness to link or relate itself to that that is outside of it. In relating itself to the object out there, consciousness thereby congnises it in terms of it being the object of cognition. While congnising the object out there, consciousness also turns upon itself, which results in its own cognition. In this manner is given rise to a duality between consciousness and the object of consciousness as the subject and consciousness as its own object. This consciousness of dualism gives birth to a distance that is difficult to bridge between the knowing consciousness and the known object. It is on account of this distance that consciousness as subject becomes prone to experiences that are painful. The Yoga system believes that by constricting the field of extroverted consciousness through introversion, there will eventuate

discontinuity between consciousness and the world out there. The immediate goal of Yoga is to make discontinuity between consciousness and the world effective. A Yogī believes that, by withdrawing the senses and consciousness from the world and by emptying the cognitive content of consciousness, he will gain access through intuition to the knowledge of Being, or should we say there would occur the disclosure of Being. In other words, it means that a Yogī realises the soteric freedom (*mukti, mokṣa*) from the profane structures of temporality the moment he succeeds in effecting discontinuity between consciousness and the world out there.

The context of yogic methodology or approach concerning the problems of life can properly be appreciated if its text is understood or analysed in terms of the soteric goal that it has set forth for itself. It is the soteric goal that is responsible in determining the reductive approach of Yoga towards the extroverted consciousness. It believes that the very reduction, nay elimination, of extroverted consciousness results in the emergence of what technically is called cosmic consciousness. That which, on the one hand, is restriction is, on the other hand, expansion. There are, thus, two movements of consciousness, namely, of restriction and of expansion, of dissolution and emergence, of opening and closing. It is in eliminating the extroverted movement of consciousness that introversion is effected, and for a Yogī introversion of consciousness is equivalent to its expansion. Introversion is achieved when the "supports" (*āśrya*) of extroverted consciousness, through the process of concentration and meditative contemplation, are taken away. A Yogī reaches the summit of mystical experience when the extroverted consciousness is reduced to the point of cipher by making it empty of its empirical content. It is upon reaching the summit of mystical experience that the Yogī comes to know the nature of the Self as being that of pure awareness.

The Buddhists have analysed the core of the matter by contrasting the process of "becoming consciousness" with the transcendent awareness as pure consciousness. The analysis of becoming consciousness has been carried out in terms of the ultimate events (*dharma*). The theory is so radical and

shocking that it deprives everything of any degree of stability. It is a theory that "deprives objects of all basis for sensory gratification, fear, love, hope and tribal sentiments, and because it is very hard to actually feel that it makes no difference whether this outside heap of *skandhas* is a boy, girl, little girl, grown girl, old woman, Smith, Jones or Green."[19] The doctrine of ultimate events is not only a theory, it is, rather, a method of self-analysis, of elimination and negation. If expressed in terms of causality, the theory would give rise to the following Buddhist formula:

> When this is, that comes to be;
> With the arising of this, that arises.
> When this is not, that does not come to be;
> With the cessation of this, that ceases.[20]

The *dharmas*, as ultimate units, arise or come into being in combination. Envisaging phenomenality as dynamic in terms of its becoming-nature, the Buddhists came to the conclusion that the very emergence of *dharmas* as phenomenal entities lasts for an infinitesimal fraction of a second. It is this view of phenomenal entities that gave rise to the theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇavāda*). The coming into being and passing away of *dharmas* is an endless process. The continuous process of becoming of *dharmas* gives birth to new *dharma*-aggregates, and they too pass away. The combination of *dharmas* has been classified into five groups (*skandhas*), which are (a) matter (*rūpa*), (b) sensation (*vedanā*), (c) perception (*saṃjñā*), (d) mental formations (*saṃskāra*), and (e) consciousness (*vijñāna*).

The *skandhas* are spoken as the "groups of appropriation." The groups of *skandhas* are not causally related to each other; rather it is the totality of conditions that cause the arising of the new *dharma*-aggregates. It is in terms of *dharmas* as ultimate units that both the personality-complex of an individual as well as the world is explained and analysed.

The belief in the reality of the individualised self or ego or person is torn to pieces the moment, in the context of this theory, it is found out that the character of the *skandhas* is not only momentary, and thereby impermanent, but also insubstantial. Since not knowing that each and every

phenomenal entity, whether organic or inorganic, is both momentary and insubstantial, it is out of sheer ignorance that a permanent ego or self is ascribed to the psycho-somatic complex called the individual. It is ignorance that is seen as one of the root-problems of human condition. In disclosing the momentary and insubstantial character of phenomenal entities, the aim of the Buddhists is to point out that suffering, in one form or the other, will be experienced insofar as permanence is sought in impermanence and substantiality in insubstantiality. In reducing phenomena to sheer fluxionality, the Buddhists thereby aim at giving rise to such a cathartic experience whereby an inner conversion is allowed to occur. It is upon this inner conversion that what, prior to conversion, is seen permanent and substantial, is now recoginsed as being both impermanent and insubstantial. It is through this reductive method or analysis that the seeker (*sādhaka*) realises the erroneous understanding he had concerning the nature of the world or of the self. He recognises that all his beliefs had so far been coloured by ignorance, and as a consequence of it had been experiencing suffering of every kind. It is in recognising the content of ignorance in which the conversion of the seeker lies. Upon conversion the seeker attempts to bring the wheel of becoming (*bhava-cakra*) to a point of standstill by carrying out the analysis of *dharmas* to its logical conclusion. For a Buddhist it results in the realisation of *nirvāṇa* or what is called the attainment of the state of cessation of suffering. But for a non-dualist Vedāntin the goal is the disclosure of Being in terms of identity, whereas for a true Yogī it is disentangling the Self (*puruṣa*) from Matter (*prakṛti*), and so is appropriately called the state of isolation (*kaivalya*). The *Yogasūtra* gives a concise and to-the-point explanation of this reductive method of analysis and self-emptying. It is asserted that, with the completion of the self-emptying, the revelation of Being occurs thus:

> Yoga is the restriction of the activity of consciousness. (When the consciousness is appeased) then the seer (viz., the Self) abides (in its) own-form.[21]

This explanation, on the surface level, may look simple and straightforward. Behind it, however, is concealed the metaphysical mind of Patañjali. The central idea contained in this explanation is this: Man is other than what he thinks of himself or takes himself to be. Man usually, out of ignorance, identifies himself either with his body or with the mental processes. Sometimes he also thinks of himself as a combination of both mind-body complex. All these misconceived ideas concerning himself are the result of ignorance. It is ignorance, thus, that is viewed as the mother of all troubles. If an individual existent is really desirous of knowing who he is, he will have to discard all forms of ignorance, which at the indvidual level would mean the deconstructing the fortification of erroneous ideas that has been constructed around oneself. The deconstruction of false ideas is actualised by acquiring, through self-introspection and meditative absorption, the intuitive wisdom and in terms of which are transcended such misidentifications that are sustained by ignorance. It is through the revelation of non-sense based knowledge that the seeker realises or comes to know who he is in terms of his essential nature. The knowledge that arises is that the individual existent is neither the body nor the mind but pure awareness or what we call Being. Śaṃkara has beautifully expressed the content of Self-Knowledge (*ātma-bodha*) thus:

> The Yogī endowed with complete enlightenment sees, through the eye of knowledge, the entire universe in his own Self and regards everything as the Self and nothing else.[22]

The Basic Themes of Yoga

The various Indian schools of philosophy or religious denominations, whether orthodox or heterodox, may differ in their approaches to, and in their interpretations of, Reality, but there are, however, some common points of agreement which all of them share together. It is the sharing together of common points that has lessened the gap of distance or difference among them. The common points of agreement that are shared by the various religious systems, including the schools of Yoga, may be summarised thus:

1. The soteriological goal of salvation of all religious denominations is determined by the commonly shared vision that life in the world is characterised by suffering. There can be different interpretations concerning the content and nature of suffering, but the fact of suffering is undeniable. The aim thus is to overcome suffering. It is the overcoming of suffering that is known as salvation.
2. Life is suffering because the individual existent, at the personal level, is caught in the web of continuous cycle of rebirths and, at the cosmic level, this moving cycle expresses itself in terms of becoming. An individual being continuously undergoes birth and death on account of what he has done previously. It is the action-caused cycle of becoming that gives rise to suffering. The other form of becoming expresses itself at the cosmic level in terms of phenomena being subject to flux. Since nothing in the world is permanent, but is subject to constant emergence and dissolution, so there arises what may be called the terror of finitude. This terror of finitude itself becomes the basis of the experience of suffering. It is these two sources of suffering that have to be overcome in terms of reaching the soteriological goal of liberation (*mokṣa*).
3. It is the fact of suffering and the causes of suffering that have determined the religious vision of the Indians, which is that the individual will continue to experience suffering insofar as he remains in the tight grip of cycle of becoming and of rebirth. The goal of any human activity, in the context of this understanding, has to be such as would result in the freedom from both becoming and rebirth, which, in the final analysis of the word, means freedom from suffering. Freedom from suffering comes to be when access to transcendental knowledge is gained. It is the search for this divine or redemptive knowledge for which each school of thought, religious practice or meditational method is engaged.

Suffering: The entire superstructure or edifice of Indian spirituality is built upon the insigh: All is suffering (*sarvaṃ*

idaṃ duḥkhaṃ). This insightful vision, and accordingly famous maxim, has set the tone and tenor of approach of the Indians towards life in the world. There has, however, been sharp criticism, particularly from the scholars of the West, against this vision. The main line of criticism is driven by the assertion that such a vision of life, being pessimistic, is life-denying. A vision that is life-denying paralyses human effort, initiative and the burning desire to fight against oppression. The critics point out that this philosophy of withdrawal is one of the reasons for India's poverty. May be this criticism is to some extent valid, but it is not true to say that this vision of life is the cause for paralysis of life itself, or is the cause for destruction of initiative. Rather this view tells us that unless our conduct is ethical, we cannot aspire at all for even worldly happiness, let alone for happiness that is other-worldly. That is why the Indians have set four goals of life (*puruṣārtha*) in front of themselves, which, if cultivated, would terminate in the appropriate experience or results. This does not mean that suffering would vanish from life. Not at all! If it is in the nature of phenomenal entities to have birth, growth, decay and death, then how can they be overcome? An existent has to endure the pain that he is bound to experience when faced with bodily and mental decay or with physical death. Also the very idea of suffering is responsible in giving rise to such theological concepts as non-injury (*ahiṃsā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). It is in the concept of compassion for sentient beings in which is incorporated the idea of non-injury, and the person of Bodhisattva exemplifies both compassion and non-injury at its best. So the Indian vision of embodied life as being the embodiment of suffering should not only be seen in terms of pessimism, but also in terms of such positive values as compassion, non-injury and reverence for life. So the criticism of the critics is not completely valid.

When an Indian theologian speaks of suffering, he is not simply referring to suffering that is caused by economic penury or physical ill health, although they may constitute essential elements in the over-all picture of what human condition is. For an Indian theologian suffering is constitutive of the very make up of what we call world or life in the world. What

pertains to the world is finite. And that which is finite has necessarily to be impermanent. It is this finitude and impermanence that is constitutive of life in the world. The core of suffering, thus, lies in the very character of that that is phenomenal and space-time bound. While speaking about suffering, the Buddha in the *Mahāvagga* declares:

> This, O monk, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering, it is the will to life that leads from birth to birth, together with lust and desire that finds gratification here and there, the thirst for pleasure, the thirst for being, the thirst for power.[23]

Or again:

> Thus, O monk, is the noble truth of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, illness is suffering, grief, distress and despair are suffering; to be united with the unwanted is suffering; to be separated from the wanted is suffering, not to obtain what is desired is suffering; in short the five groups (*skandha*) are suffering.[24]

Suffering, as an experiential category, is antithetical or opposed to that that is of the nature of bliss, of peace and of joy. All that is transient terminates in the experience of suffering. Even the delightful experiences of the transient realm end up ultimately in dejection, despair and sorrow. It is so because "whatever is transitory, is sorrowful."[25] The only mode of existence that is free from transiency, and thereby from impermanence and suffering, is the unconditioned existence. The unconditioned existence, being transcendent and free from such phenomenal characteristics as temporality, subject-object duality, is eternal, free from bodily and mental afflictions, blissful, unborn and unmade. The embodied existence, on the contrary, is finite, temporal, full of limitaions, subject to space-time, and so filled with experiences that are painful. It offers nothing but pain. Suffering is not merely to be understood in terms of physical pain, mental unrest, or in terms of natural calamities; rather its significance has to be grasped as the basic truth of life in the world. It is in the context of this understanding of embodied life that the following statement is made by the *Yogasūtra:*

> By reason of the sorrowfulness of the transmutation (of consciousness) the afflictions (of life) and the impressions (in the subconscious) and on account of the disharmony of the activity of the primary consitituents (of nature)—to the discerning (Yogī) everything is suffering.[26]

Seeing suffering everywhere in the world, nay the world itself as the embodiment of suffering, the effort of Indian theologians has been directed towards finding out both ethical and practical means by the employment of which deliverance from the bondage of suffering could be realised. The bonds that bind man to the peg of suffering, or to the suffering producing structures, are collectively known as bondage. It is this bondage of suffering that has to be broken into pieces by employing such meditative, ascetical and intellectual means whereby deliverance or freedom from the phenomenal structures of suffering is obtained. As the opposite of suffering is joy, so the deliverance from suffering means the attainment of eternal joy. "That which is all-encompassing (*bhūma*) is joy. There is no joy in the limited."[27]

Although the content of physical and mental suffering may be known to all, the metaphysical implications of suffering, however, are understood by the few. The few that understand the worth of suffering are the seers who have transcended the conditioned limitations of embodied existence, who have experienced, in the depths of their being, the never-ending joy of the infinite. It is the seer who, through his spiritual insight, penetrates the heart of phenomenality. He understands the character of transitory pleasures to be tragic and full of despair. He is not deceived by the external glitter of the world or by the transitory delights of the senses. In each sensual pleasure or bodily delight he discovers the hidden disease called sorrow.[28] A true Yogī, therefore, knows that the "sorrow springs from the flood of sensual pleasures," and the moment "the object of desire is removed,"[29] there flows freedom from suffering. Understood thus, suffering is viewed as one of the most important marks of the conditioned existence. The one who understands suffering in such a manner, for him it is a great teacher that teaches him how to seek deliverance in terms of ultimate freedom. There is only one escape route from the clutches of suffering, according to the seer, and that is to realise

the unconditioned mode of existence, which, in other words, means of gaining insight into one's essential nature in terms of the disclosure of Being. To put the matter in yogic terminology, freedom from suffering should be understood as equivalent to the discovery of the Self, and the Self, being transcendent to the little self, is thereby beyond the shadow of suffering.

It is no use to look at suffering only negatively. Suffering has a positive aspect too. For the intelligent seeker suffering is the main incentive for seeking such a mode of joy that is not subject to finitude, and thereby also not to suffering. It is as an incentive that suffering has a positive value. Unless, for example, there is disease, there can neither be medicine nor the cure. It is the very nature of disease that leads to the discovery of such an appropriate medicine that becomes the cause for the elimination of disease. Similar is the case with suffering. Suffering in itself, however, is not desirable. It is an evil that is unavoidable insofar as embodied existence is concerned.[30] Most of the Indian spiritual thinkers are of the view that the origin of suffering is neither in the world nor in God, but lies in the metaphysical ignorance. It is ignorance that influences the will, and accordingly will wills such actions that are unwholesome. It amounts to saying that it is our subjectivity that really is the source of the existential troubles that we experience daily. It is upon the realisation of inner purity that the luminous light of freedom illumines our being, which, in other words, means the eradication of impurity. The inner purity is effected in and through such ethical norms and ascetical practices that have been prescribed by the scriptures (*śāstra*).

Suffering, thus, has a positive effect upon the individual, in that, in the words of Patañjali, it leads to the cherished goal of soteric freedom: "(That which is) to be abandoned is sorrow yet to come."[31] The painful condition of the conditioned existence can be changed towards the better only when the operations of the mind are stilled. It is upon the transcendence of the active consciousness that the true nature of the Self is discovered. Therefore "Only by knowing the (Self) can one go beyond death (as the ultimate form of suffering). No other

path to freedom is known."[32] And elsewhere it is said: "The joy (*ānanda*) of the Self, which is non-different from it (viz., *brahman*), is unconditional, unending and unexcellable. No sorrow overshadows it (viz., Self), for not a trace of desire or selfish purpose is in it, which would sustain the cycle of pleasure-sorrow."[33]

With the removal of nescience, suffering loses its significance and meaning. "He also knows the Self, traverses (all) sorrow."[34] In this is the soteric goal of Yoga realised and achieved.

Rebirth: The doctrine of rebirth (*punar-janma*) and re-death (*punar-mṛtyu*) is one of the most important foundational doctrines that has been responsible in determining the ethos, content and orientation of Indian vision of life as well as of those elements that are constitutive of spirituality. The doctrine initially seems to have had naturalistic origin, in that it is based upon the observation of such natural phenomena, within the womb of Nature, that occur repeatedly and in accordance with definite laws. We observe that seasons follow each other with a regularity that is unquestionable. Upon the eclipse of winter emerges spring. Likewise the trees shed their leaves when autumn steps in, but emerge again with the beginning of spring. Similarly we know that no effect can occur unless it has a cause. It is such-like observations that must have led the ancient Indians to the discovery of the theory of rebirth. And the aim of the theory is to explain on the pattern of natural causality as to why beings are born in the world and what are the reasons for the different existential conditions that each existent experiences. It is these unanswerable questions of life and death that the theory attempts, as rationally as possible, to explain through a discourse that is reasonable and less offensive.

There is no indication as to the existence of the theory of rebirth or of karman in the early sacred literature, viz., the Vedas, which would mean that the early Aryans had no notion as to whether an existent, upon death, is re-born again. There is, however, a late hymn in the *Ṛgveda*[35] that has the possibility of being interpreted in terms of the doctrine of rebirth. The hymn most probably indicates that the life principle, upon the biological death of an individual, survives either in the realm

of heavenly gods or in the abode of forefathers. There is also an indication in the hymn that seems to be saying that some souls may be surviving in the realm of utter darkness, thereby indicating the concept of hell. The hymn, however, does not maintain that the soul, after death, re-incarnates itself, in accordance with the nature of deeds done prior to death, in another physical frame or body. The hymn seems to be saying more about the survival of soul after death than about rebirth. This state of affairs of silence concerning the destiny of man after death continues till the time of the Brāhmaṇas. It is in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[36] where, for the first time, the idea of re-death (*punar-mṛtyu*) appears. Although the idea of rebirth is not spoken of in clear terms, yet its existence can be inferred from the idea of re-death. This is so because re-death is not possible unless there is rebirth of an individual being. Be as it may, it is during the early Upaniṣadic period that the idea of transmigration of soul, upon the death of the body, bursts forth openly. It is during this period that the doctrine of rebirth is openly incorporated into the over-all doctrinal framework of Brāhmaṇism. Even the heterodox schools like Jainism and Buddhism make this doctrine as the foundation of their respective soteriologies.

The first clear indication of the doctrine may be traced to a passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[37] in which the dialogue between Yājñvalkya and Ārtabhāga is recorded thus:

> 'Yājñavalkya,' said (Ārtabhāga), 'when the speech of this dead person enters into fire, the breath into the life-force (*prāṇa*), the eye into the sun, the mind into the moon, what then becomes of this person?'
> (Said Yājñavalkya), 'Ārtabhāga, my friend, take my hand. We two shall know of this. This is not for us (to discuss) publicly.'
> The two left and deliberated. What they talked about was karman and what they praised was karman: verily, one becomes good (*puṇya*) by good actions, bad (*pāpa*) by bad actions.

This passage is ambivalent and obscure insofar as the hardcore doctrine of rebirth or transmigration of the soul is concerned. The language that is used in establishing the fact of rebirth of the soul is a kind of twilight language that Tāntrikas make use of with regard to their antinomian

practices. There is however an indication, in the midst of hazy obscurity, concerning rebirth. It is *a priori* implied that man becomes good by good actions and bad by evil actions. This, however, could also mean that man becomes good in this very life by doing good deeds, and vice versa through bad deeds. This statement concerning the causal efficacy of action can be interpreted either way, viz., it can either mean that one obtains good rebirth through good actions or becomes good in this very life. In whatever way the statement may be interpreted, the fact of causal efficacy of action is established by saying that man's state of life in the world is dependent upon the kind of actions he performs or has performed.

Yājñavalkya, in another place and at another occasion, is more explicit in his enunciation of the doctrine of rebirth. While making use of metaphors, similes and images, he succeeds in conveying the centrality of the doctrine of rebirth. Here Yājñavalkya looks at the theory from a different perspective. It is not the body that attracts the Self; rather it is the Self that attracts the body towards itself. If it is so, it means that the Self itself is responsible for allowing itself to be embodied. This is how Yājñavalkya delineates the doctrine by making the use of such images as of caterpillar or gold.

> And, as a caterpillar, after having reached the end of the blade of grass, and having made another approach (to another blade), draws itself together towards it, thus does this Self, after having thrown off this body, and dispelled all ignorance, and after making another approach (to another body), draws itself towards it. And, as a smith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another, newer and more beautiful shape, so does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, make unto itself another, newer, and more beautiful shape, whether it be like the Fathers or like the Gandharvas or like the Devas, or like Prajāpati, or like Brahman, or like other beings.[38]

The above statements of Yājñavalkya, apart from the doctrine of rebirth, can also be interpreted pantheistically, which is to say that the world and the beings therein are nothing but the manifestation of the transcendent Self. As so many ornaments of different shapes and sizes can be made of gold, so does the Self manifest itself in the diversity of beings and entities in the world. Even though many kinds of ornaments

are made of gold, yet all of them remain gold essentially, which means that the nature of all the ornaments made of gold is identical with the substance called gold. From this can be concluded that it is the Self that really re-incarnates itself anew upon throwing off the old body that is worn out.

The clearest statement that is made concerning the doctrine of rebirth is located in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*[39] when the doctrine of Two Paths—that of the Fathers (*pitṛ-yāna*) and of the Gods (*deva-yāna*)—is discussed. They who, after death, traverse the Path of the Fathers go straight to the world of ancestors from where they are sent back to the world of human beings in newer forms and shapes. They who traverse the Path of the Gods go to the Absolute from where they have not to return to our world. The former Path represents transmigration, whereas the latter one represents final salvation. In the ninth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* both these Paths have been explained thoroughly.

In the Upaniṣads of the Middle Period the doctrine of transmigration is fully developed in terms of linking it explicitly to the causal efficacy of karman. It is now seen that man's future, in terms of his destiny, is determined more by his deeds than by God. Thus is given birth to an iron-fisted theory of causal determinism. Thus is envisaged an eschatology upon which is imposed such a causal determinism of action that has complete freedom to determine the earthly life of an existent in the future. Accordingly are we informed by the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad:*[40]

> According unto his deeds the embodied one successively assumes forms in various conditions:
> coarse and fine, many in number,
> the embodied one chooses forms according to his own qualities.
> Each subsequent cause of his union with them is seen to be because of the quality of his acts and of himself.

It is now explicitly stated that whatever actions an individual existent performs not only give their immediate fruit in accordance with their qualities in the present, but also determine the quality of life hereafter and the character of the eventual re-birth. It means that man, or, for that matter,

any creature after death, instead of experiencing the torments of hell or the pleasures of heaven eternally, is reborn again in accordance with the quality of his deeds. The dualistic doctrine of hell and heaven is abandoned in favour of transmigration of the soul. And this transmigration is dependent upon the quality of deeds. Good deeds result, after death, in a positive state of rebirth, whereas the consequences of evil actions are negative, which means the rebirth would be of such a quality that is pitiable. Man will be blessed with a good future rebirth if his deeds, prior to his death, have been of supernal quality, and vice versa if the deeds are of degrading nature. This theory of rebirth and karman visualises an eschatological scheme that tells us that the consequences of one's deeds are exhausted the moment a new birth after death takes place. The spiritual consequences of the theory are irrevocable in terms of rebirth. But at the same time one has the possibility or scope of transcending the effects of karman, may be over many births, by choosing deliberately the path of spiritual meditation. The determinism that follows from actions does not mean that human liberty is suppressed or negated. Man is given all the freedom to choose his future destiny. It is an Either/Or choice. One can freely choose what one wants to be. It is futile therefore to blame the so-called destiny. It is we ourselves who make the destiny by making choices either for good deeds or for bad deeds. Thus the doctrine of karman represents the law of causation that is projected on to the moral order. In its more developed form the doctrine has been interpreted thus:

> A dead (person) is said to have gone (for good), but this is untrue and false. Having become separated from space and time, he experiences (a different level of reality). Having cast off (his body), the (ordinary) being, steeped in his desire (*vāsanā*), assumes a new body, as a monkey, leaving one tree in the forest, swings to another.[41]

The interpretation that is offered now of karman-causality is not in terms of the actual performance of the deed. It is not the deed in itself that really determines the future destiny of the individual. It is the state of the mind at the time of performance of the deed that is what really counts. It means

that it is not the actual performance or physical aspect of the deed that is of importance. It is the state of our subjectivity that really should be taken note of. Thus the physical aspect of a deed is abandoned in favour of subjective sources of what we do or think. What this understanding concerning the performance of action is saying is that it is the mental disposition and motive behind the deed that counts. Each mental volition leaves its imprint (*saṃskāra*) in the subconscious mind. It means that the subconscious memory consists of a heap of impressions, which are to be found in the form of latent traces in the mind. The traces, in the form of latent fluids of desire (*vāsanā*), are the potential seeds which, when activated, determine the character of a person. We do what we do because of these traces. The individual, upon his new birth, inherits the traces that have been stored in the subconscious in previous lives. In this manner the cycle of births and deaths, called *saṃsāra*, is allowed to continue.

In subjectivising action, the Indian theoreticians arrived at the conclusion that it is not mere performance of an action that gives a corresponding result. A person already becomes the sharer in the fruit of action at that point of time when thought arises in the mind. If I think evil about someone or utter unbecoming words, I have already become the participant in the fruit of action even though I may not have performed it physically. That is why purity of thought and of word is as much needed as is the execution of a deed. If our mental dispositions or thinking is pure, the deeds that will ensue from such a mental state will also be pure, and so will be their fruit also.

It is good for us to remind ourselves of one of the acute observations of Indian thinkers. A real seeker is not so much desirous of seeking the delights of the heaven as much as of freedom from the bondage of rebirth. This is so because action of any kind, viz., both good and bad, terminate in a definite result, which means that good actions will terminate in a good birth of an individual, whereas evil actions will lead to a kind of birth that is undesirable. Both forms of action, however, keep an individual tied to the bondage of rebirth. What a seeker wants is not a good rebirth, but freedom from the

cycle of rebirth. So a Yogī endeavours at effecting discontinuity in the wheel of becoming through the attainment of spiritual enlightenment (*bodhi, prajñā*). Insofar as man remains unenlightened, his karmic fluids or seeds, whether good or bad, will bear their fruit in terms of rebirth. But the deeds of an enlightened Yogī, however, are free from the causal consequences, because, in the words of Patañjali, the doer (viz., the ego) has ceased to exist.[42]

It were the Buddhists who re-interpreted anew the transmigratory cycle of existents not in terms of reincarnation of a permanent soul or self or ego. For them the so-called permanent self is inexistent. It is upon the realisation of non-existence of the self (*pudgala-śūnyatā*) that the soteric goal of liberation (*vimutti*) is reached. The Mahāyānists, however, went one more step further. For them liberation is realised not simply by realising the inexistence of the self, but also by realising the inexistence of objective entities (*dharma-śūnyatā*). This reinterpretation of the theory is based upon the assumption that it is not the self or ego that, upon the discarding of the present body, enters a new body in accordance with the quality of karman that have been performed previously. Keeping the theory of flux in view, the Buddhists have understood transmigration from one existence to another in terms of re-becoming (*punar-bhava*). The theory of re-becoming discards the substantialist view of the self in favour of the theory of inexistence of the self. It is not the substantial or permanent self that transmigrates from one body to another. The explanation that is offered concerning re-becoming is in terms of the conditional causes (*pratītya-samutpāda*).[43] The entity, if we are allowed to say so, that re-becomes comes into being or emerges by depending upon the previous existence.[44] The occurrence of re-becoming of an entity is similar to the light that is derived by one lamp from the other.

What is it, one may ask, that causes re-becoming, or what we call rebirth to be? It is the sum total of man's activities that become the cause for re-becoming. It is not only re-becoming that is caused by our activities, but also equally the quality of re-becoming. When human action is seen as the cause of re-becoming, it does not simply mean the physical execution of

action, but also includes the mental volition (*cetanā*) into its ambit. It is karman, both in its physical and mental aspects, that keeps the wheel of becoming (*bhava-cakra*) in motion. To gain freedom from this wheel of becoming is dependent to what extent discontinuity is brought within the wheel, viz., is brought to the point of standstill, or what the Buddhists call cessation. This discontinuity, according to the Buddhists, is effected within the wheel when the state of non-action, through contemplative enstasy, is attained. Thus we are advised:

> O fool!
> Renounce your desire[45] to accumulate riches;
> Create in your mind pure thoughts, devoid of craving;
> Content your heart (*citta*) with that that falls to you
> as a gift from deeds past.[46]

The terrible consequences that follow from karman are outlined by Śaṃkara thus:

> The deeds (of past experiences) produce the link with the (new) body. From the connection with the body (arises the experience of) pleasure and pain. This is followed by attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*). Thence (follow) more deeds from which (are produced) benevolent (*dharma*) (consequences). Subsequently unenlightened (must suffer) renewed connection with a body. Thus the world (*saṃsāra*) rolls on eternally like a wheel.[47]

As we have pointed out above as to what the karman-effect, in the form of impressions, upon the mind is, so it is, therefore, necessary to say few more words concerning it. All the effects of karman, in the form of seeds or fluids, are stored in the mind, or what the Buddhists call storehouse consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*). The subliminal impressions are seen as the basic cause for the fructification of successive rebirths. The series of rebirths will continue till the impressions remain active in the mind. It is the impressions, when activated, that give impetus to the volitional activity of the mind. The activity of the subliminal impressions cannot be de-activated or neutralised through bodily death or through the abandonment of action. The only way of neutralising action is to exhaust the accumulated impressions by gaining, through contemplative

absorption, access to wisdom-gnosis. It is by uprooting the impressions from the mind that real freedom from rebirth or re-becoming is realised.[48]

It, however, should be kept in mind that karman is responsible only for the present state of existence, which means that it is in our hands to determine the future destiny of our existence. We have the choice of either performing actions that are wholesome or actions that are unwholesome. Whether we perform wholesome or unwholesome deeds, it matters little insofar as rebirth is concerned, as in both conditions rebirth cannot be avoided. The goal, thus, should be of reaching such a spiritual state whereby the fruit of action is completely neutralised, and thereby also is neutralised rebirth. Man, therefore, has been given the choice of freedom to choose between freedom and bondage. It is no use to blame God or curse destiny. It is we ourselves who have made the choice, and once the choice is made, we also have to be ready for the consequences of the choice that we have made.

The re-becoming or rebirth, in the context of karman, is closely linked to Time (*kāla*). It is through karman that the entire series of events, in terms of Time, come into being. Man, as an embodied existent, is made to experience finitude of temporality. It is finiteness of Time that constitutes the essence of becoming, of emergence and dissolution, of expansion and contraction, of birth and death, etc. The wheel of becoming continues till the temporal sequence of Time, in the form of events, continues. It is, therefore, Time that is responsible in breaking the primordial unity within Being. Rightly has been said that

> There is nothing in the universe that all-voracious Time does not devour, like the submarine fire (swallows) the overflowing ocean.[49]

The subliminal impressions operate within the continuum of Time. The destruction of impressions implies the elimination of Time itself, because mind no more functions in a sequential order, which is the bane of Time.[50] The uprooting of the impressions is possible only when there is an inner re-orientation, which has to be characterised by a cathartic

conversion (*metanoia*). And this inner re-orientation or conversion comes to be when inner and outer purity is made an actuality. For this purpose the Buddhists have envisaged the spiritual scheme in terms of the Eightfold Path, whereas the *Yogasūtra* has laid emphasis upon the cessation of the operations of the mind, which is actualised through meditative withdrawal. Both the spiritual methods are aimed at transforming the inner world of man, so that the wheel of becoming or of rebirth is brought to a point of standstill, which also at the same means the elimination of suffering and the restoration of peace. The Buddhist Eightfold Path consists of the following items:

1. Right vision (*samyag-dṛṣṭi*) is the right understanding that Buddha gained at the time of enlightenment. The vision consists of in the understanding that phenomenal entities that we see solid and stable are basically impermanent and insubstantial. Moreover, life in the world, nay the world itself, is suffering. Thus the three marks of impermanence, insubstantiality and suffering constitute what may be called the right vision.
2. Right thought (*samyag-saṃkalpa*) consists of the following decisions: To abandon that that is transient, to cultivate compassion for the good of others, and to practice non-violence in thought, word and deed.[51]
3. Right speech (*samyag-vāca*) means to be ever watchful over the operations of the tongue and the mind, which means never to be offensive either in word or thought.
4. Right conduct (*samyag-karmānta*) denotes right moral behaviour, which consists of in the practice of non-violence, non-stealing and charity.
5. Right livelihood (*samyag-ājīva*) implies that one should earn one's livelihood in such a manner as not to engage in such a profession in which violence of any kind is involved.
6. Right effort (*samyag-vyāyāma*) connotes that effort that is through and through righteous—and for this purpose the maintenance of the right state of mind is necessary.
7. Right mindfulness (*samyag-smṛti*) is an attempt, through

introspective analysis, to be conscious of the various mental and physical processes that eventuate at a given point of time.

8. Right contemplation (*samyag-samādhi*) is a meditative method that leads progressively to introversion, and ultimately, when the enstatic state is reached, the extroverted consciousness becomes non-operational.

The mind, as a repository of impressions, is, according to the *Yogasūtra*, the source of afflictions (*kleśa*).[52] The basic cause for the arising of suffering is spiritual ignorance. It is the fertile ground of nescience that allows the birth of afflictions to occur. The afflictions come into being when the mind is under the grip of the following dispositions (*vṛtti*): I-am-ness (*asmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and love for life (*abhiniveśa*). The afflictions are either latent (*prasupta*) or occasional (*tanu*) or momentarily absent (*vicchinna*) or in operation all the time (*udāra*).[53]

The Yogī, through yogic methods, aims at sublimating the causes of suffering.[54] The total elimination of the causes is achieved only when the process of sublimation has been fully realised. With the removal of ignorance and its products, the Yogī gains the highest supreme wisdom (*prajñā*), which, once for all, enables him to cross the sorrowful ocean of the conditioned existence.

Freedom: As the belief in karman and rebirth in the early Vedic literature is not very prominent, so the doctirne of soteric freedom too is not displayed prononuncedly. This does not mean that they (viz., the early Aryans) were not concerned with the question of life after death. Their main concern, however, was to find necessary solutions to the earthly problems of life that they were encountering while settling in the Gangetic plains of India. Upon having given attention to the physical problems of life, they then turned their attention towards metaphysical or abstract questions. This concern of theirs for life after death is reflected in some of the later hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, which means that they must have engaged in the reflection of metaphysical questions only when the earthly problems had been solved to some extent.

The term *mokṣa* (freedom, liberation, salvation, etc.) is derived from the root *muc*, meaning to free or to liberate. The early Aryans made use of this term in the context of ethical transgressions. Whenever this term was made use of, it was used in the context of gaining freedom from sin (*pāpa*).[55] In its earliest use the term does not connote a state of being; rather it connotes a process. It is during the Upaniṣadic period that *moksa* is understood as the realisation of the unconditioned state of being. The realisation of the unconditioned state is understood in terms of immortality (*amṛta*) or total release from the phenomenal process. Speaking about the state of immortality or non-death, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*[56] says the following:

> Beyond the sense organs is the mind; above the mind is the essence-of-mind (*sattva-buddhi*); beyond the essence-of-mind is the great; above the great self is the Unmanifest. Beyond even the Unmanifest is the Self (*puruṣa*), all-pervading and without any mark. Knowing It a person is emancipated and attains to immortality (*amṛtattva*).

The idea of freedom as immortality or non-death, however, did not gain much adherence in the Upaniṣads. Of course, some medieval fringe schools of Yoga, particularly like those of Haṭhayoga, did seek immortality through the transmutation of body. But the over-all picture concerning freedom has always been in terms of realisation of the unconditioned state of existence, which is equated with the knowledge of the Self, and thereby with the cessation of the cycle of rebirth. Freedom, in fact, is understood as liberation from embodied existence, or from causes and conditions that cause the cycle of rebirth to be.

The interpretation as to what is the nature of freedom differs from one religious schools of thought to another. For the Yogī freedom means the attainment of the state of isolation (*kaivalyaṃ*). It is a state in which the Self remains totally detached from the operations of Nature, and so may be seen as the symbol of withdrawal, of abandonment, of inner solitude. This state of detachment of the Self also means freedom from the primary constituents (*guṇa*) of Nature. This

freedom of detachment or isolation signifies complete freedom from the world. It, therefore, would not be wrong to say that Yoga is a process of dissociation (*viyogaḥ*). A Yogī, by employing the methods of dissociation, realises transcendental freedom in terms of isolation or what is called self-abiding. Patañjali defines the state of isolation thus:

> The re-absorption of the primary constituents (which have become) deviod of purpose from the Self is (what is designated) as isolation, or the power of consciousness abiding in (its) own-being.[57]

What is this power of consciousness (*cit-śakti*) that abides in its own-being? It is the transcendent Self or what may be called pure awareness or the witnessing consciousness that witnesses as a detached spectator the happenings out there. It is the realisation of the Self as pure consciousness that is spoken of as freedom. The state of freedom is antithetical to that that is conditioned, because the conditioned represents bondage or the world of limitations, of finitude, of pain, of death, etc. The state of freedom, on the contrary, is atemporal, and therefore free from temporal death, from becoming, from finitude, etc. The Buddha has beautifully explained as to what constitutes the state of freedom:

> Freedom is the realm where there is neither earth nor water, neither fire nor air, nor the realm of space-infinity, nor the realm of no-thingness, nor the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, neither this world nor a world yonder nor both, neither the sun nor the moon. Here, monks, I declare that there is no coming or going, no duration or destruction or origination. This is without support, without continuance, without condition. This is the end of suffering.[58]

The realisation of freedom, however, does not imply that one acquires a new being. Freedom simply means the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of the fact that one always was free and never in bondage. It is the veil of ignorance that deprives the individual from recognising this essential fact of being free. The purity of the Self, prior to realisation, is the same as it is after enlightenment. The unenlightened think of the Self as being caught in the fetters of bondage. It is this unenlightened

kind of thinking that is the crux of the problem. In fact, the Self is always free:

> Even as a disc stained by dust shines brilliantly when cleansed, so the embodied existent, on seeing the reality of the Self, becomes unitary, fulfilled and free from sorrow.[59]

With the realisation of transcendental freedom the mind-body complex loses its significance. There are, however, two viewpoints concerning liberation vis-à-vis the mind-body complex. One view is that complete liberation from the bondage of limitations, and thereby from suffering, is possible only after discarding of the body, viz., after death—and this kind of liberation is called disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*). The other view is that liberation is possible even while having a body and accordingly such a type of liberation is called liberation-in-life (*jīvan-mukti*). The liberated-in-life is the one who "does not concern himself with the future, nor does he abide (solely) in the present, nor does he revoke the past, but acts out of the Whole. When the objective world is perceived as the unitary, then the mind fears neither bondage nor emancipation."[60]

Liberation basically means to gain knowledge of Being in Becoming, of eternity in temporality, of the unconditioned in the conditioned, of the infinite in the finite.[61] It is an experience in which consciousness experiences everything as One. It is an experience in which the experiencer abides as well shines forth in his own-being. A Yogī who has realised self-integration is spoken of as the one who is established in the transcendental knowledge of the Absolute. Although living in the world, he is beyond it. Accordingly says the *Bhagavadgītā*:

> He whose mind is unagitated in sorrow, who is devoid of longing in pleasurable experiences, free from passion, fear and anger—he is called a sage of steadied vision. He who is unattached towards everything, who rejoices not at whatever good comes to him, nor hates whatever bad (he may encounter)—his wisdom (*prajñā*) is well estabished.[62]

References

1. *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, 31.15: *saṃyoga yoga ity-ukto-jīva-ātma-parama-ātmanoḥ*.
2. *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, 14.123: *yogo-jīva-ātmonar-aikyam*. The *Bhagavadgītā* gives the following definitions of Yoga: (1) Yoga is the state of evenness both in success and failure (2.48); (2) Yoga is a skilful living among activities (2.50); (3) Yoga is attained by contemplation (2.53); (4) Yoga is the supreme secret of life (4.3); (5) Yoga is a producer of the greatest felicity (5.2); (6) Yoga is peace (6.3); (7) Yoga is non-attachment (6.4); (8) Yoga destroys affliction (6.17); (9) Yoga is the absence of pain (6.23); (10) Yoga means self-control (6.36); and (11) Yoga is concentration (8.12).
3. *Yogasūtra*, 1.2: *Yogaścitta vṛtti nirodha*. The *Yogasūtra* prescribes that the suppression of the operations of the mind can be brought about when the feeling of dispassion (*vairāgya*) pervades the entire being of the aspirant (*sādhaka*). The yogic methods of withdrawal are meant to eliminate the dispositions of the mind—and the elimination of dispositions is possible if the aspirant is regular in maintaining the yogic practice (*abhyāsa*). The yogic methods of withdrawal become successful only when the aspirant cultivates dispassion dispassionately. A time comes when an intense form of dispassion (*parama-vairāgya*) seizes the aspirant. It is a state in which the analysis is carried to a point when the Self appears as distinct from all else, then absolutely no desire arises for anything or of anything or for any form of matter (cf. ibid., 1.16). To suppress the operations of the mind is to arrive at the state of complete vacuity (cf. Monier-Williams, *Hinduism*, reprint, Calcutta, 1951, p. 140). According to T.M.P. Mahadevan, once "the mind is still and emptied, and . . . there is no more reflection in it, the Spirit will realise its true nature and escape from the snares of primal matter." *Invitation to Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 212. See for further information *Yogasūtra*, 1. 6-11; 13, 15.
4. *Yogasūtra*, 1.6; see also 2.15.
5. The term *yogin*, derived from the same root from which is derived the term *yoga*, denotes a person who is engaged in the ascetical as well as meditational praxis of Yoga. The practitioner of Yoga can either be a male or a female. A female practitioner of Yoga is referred to as a Yoginī, whereas a male one is called a Yogī.

   In order to achieve the title of a full-fledged Yogī, the practitioner (*abhyāsin*) has to go through several stages. A beginner is called an *ārurukṣu*, whereas a person who is already engaged in the real yogic practice is called a *yuñjana*. A proficient Yogī is referred to as a person who has ascended the ladder of Yoga (*yoga-ārūḍha*). Such a Yogī is

given such epithets as, for example, "the yoked one" (*yoga-yuka*) or "the one who is steady in wisdom" (*sthitaprajñā*). See Vijñānabhikṣu, *Yogasārasaṃgraha*.

Vyāsa has made a fourfold division in his *bhāṣya* on the *Yogasūtra* (3.51) concerning the spiritual gradation of a Yogī. The gradation consists of (i) the beginner (*prathama-kālpikā*); (ii) of a Yogī of delightful stage (*madhu-bhūmikā*); (iii) of a Yogī who has attained the light of wisdom (*prajñā-joyti*); and (iv) of a Yogī who is about to transcend the causal world of phenomenality (*atikrānta-bhāvanīya*). Vyāsa (ibid., 3.51) speaks about this division thus: "The first is the one connected with practice, (and) for whom light is just dawning. The second (kind of Yogī) has (attained to) truth-bearing transcendental knowledge. The third is he who has subjugated the elements and sense organs and who has developed means for securing all that has been and is yet to be cultivated (by him). . . . While the fourth (kind of Yogī) has passed that which may be cultivated, has as his sole aim the resolution (*pratisarga*) of the mind (into the Ultimate Reality)." See also *Bhagavadgītā*, 2.56; 6.3, 4, 18.

6. *Yogasūtra*, 1.6.
7. Bhoja, *Rājamārtaṇḍa*, 1.1: *Yogaḥ viyogaḥ*.
8. Śaṃkara, *Nirvāṇa Śatakam*, v. 1.
9. *Bhagavadgītā* (5.24-26) explains the nature of the spiritual state of the liberated thus: "He whose happiness is within, whose delight is within, and likewise whose light even is within—that Yogī, being of the nature of *brahman*, goes up into the nirvāṇa of *brahman*."
10. *Bhagavadgītā*, 5.15; *Aparokṣānubhūti*, vv. 15-16.
11. *Pañcadaśī*, 6.12.
12. *Yogasūtra*, 1.34; 49.
13. The following lines from the *Light of Asia* of Edwin Arnold describe the character of temporal existence graphically:

    I, Buddha, who wept with all my brother's tears.
    Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe,
    Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty.
    Ho! Ye who suffer! Know.
    Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compells,
    None other holds you that ye live and die;
    And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss,
    Its spokes of agony,
    Its tyre of tears, its nave of nothingess (bk. 8).

14. *Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.3; *Bhagavadgītā*, 1.6.
15. *Yogasūtra*, 4.32.
16. Śaṃkara, *Ātmabodha*, v. 50: "A Yogī who is *jīvanmukta* (liberated-in-life), after crossing the ocean of delusion and killing the monsters of

passion and aversion, becomes one with Peace and dwells in the Bliss derived from the realisation of the Self alone."

17. Cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 4. 9-10; 8. 28; 9. 34; 10.10; 11.53-55; 18.54-56, 62. Also see 6.10-18.
18. *Yogasūtra*, 4.29-30.
19. E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, London, 1982, p. 103.
20. *Majjhimanikāya*, 2. 32; cf. *Udāna*, 8. Christmas Humphreys gives the summary of the theory in the following words, "There is no first cause, no ultimate end. Manifestation, so long as it endures, is a Wheel of Becoming, and all selves within it are bound upon that wheel. We are what we are and are incomplete, unhappy, filled with suffering. The cause of that misery is desire, the cause of desire is ignorance, the illusion of self, the belief that the part can put its separate self against the will and welfare of the whole." *Buddhism*, London, 1951, p. 19.
21. *Yogasūtra*, 1.2-3.
22. *Ātmabodha*, v. 47.
23. See Moti Lal Pandit, *The Fundamentals of Buddhism*, Delhi, 1979, p. 26.
24. *Mahāvagga*, 1.6. 9. The Buddha has explained, while delivering the Fire-Sermon, the cause of suffering thus: "All things are on fire, the eye is on fire, forms are on fire, eye-consciousness is on fire, the impressions received by the eye are likewise on fire, and whatever sensations originate from the impressions received by the eye are likewise on fire. And with what are these things on fire? With the fire of lust, anger, and illusion, with these are they on fire, and so with the other senses and with the mind. Wherefore the wise man conceives disgust for the senses, he removes from his heart the cause of suffering." Quoted in: Christmas Humphreys, *Buddhism*, p. 19.
25. Cf. Pandit, op. cit., p. 28.
26. *Yogasūtra*, 2.15; cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3. 4. 2:

    The Seer of seeing cannot be perceived.
    The Hearer of hearing cannot be heard.
    The Thinker of thinking canot be thought.
    The Understander of understanding cannot be understood.
    It is your Self within everything.
    And else is sorrowful (*arta*).

27. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7.23.1.
28. This is what the *Dhammapada* has to say concerning the origin of suffering: "From merriment cometh sorrow; from merriment cometh fear. Whosoever is free from merriment, for him there is no sorrow : Whence should fear come to him? From love cometh sorrow; from love cometh fear. Whosoever is free from love, for him there is no sorrow: Whence should fear come to him?" Quoted in: A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, New York, 1916, p. 83.

29. *Visuddhimagga*, chap. 17.
30. Suffering, according to the Indian thinkers, is of three kinds: suffering that is caused by man himself, and so is subject-conditioned (*ādhyātmika*). The second kind of suffering is caused by the natural circumstances, and is accordingly called environmental (*ādhibhautika*). Finally, we have suffering whose origin is believed to be supernatural, and so is seen in terms of destiny (*ādhi-daivika*). Suffering is also seen to be closely related to the idea of the wheel of life (*bhava-cakra*). It is an idea that tells us that all forms of existence, on the one hand, are inter-linked like the links of a chain and, on the other hand, discloses the belief that all appearances are circular in nature. That which is circular is never ending. It has neither the beginning nor an end. Therefore, all manifestations of life, being bound to the circulatory movement of becoming, suffer in terms of endless transmigration. It is the realisation of liberation (*mokṣa*) that ultimately releases the suffering subject from the bondage of pain.
31. *Yogasūtra*, 2.16.
32. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 3.8.
33. Ibid., 3.10.
34. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7.1.3.
35. *Ṛgveda*, 1.4.10; 164.30, 38; 4.26.1; 10.14.4; 177.30.
36. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1.5.3.4; 2.3.3.9; 10.1.4.14; 11.5.6.9.
37. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.2.13. Further on (4.4.5) we read: "Now as a man is like this or like that, according as he acts, and according as he behaves, so will he be: a man of good acts will become good, a man of bad acts, bad. He becomes pure by pure deeds, bad by bad deeds. And there they say that a person consists of desires. And, as his desires, so is his will, and, as his will, so is his deed, and whatever deeds he does, that he will reap."
38. Ibid., 4.4.2-6.
39. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 5.10.10. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (6.2.15-16) the doctrine of the Two Paths is explained thus. The Path of the Gods: "Those who know this [viz., the theory of Five Fires (*pañca-agni*)], and those who in the forest worship faith and the true, go to light, from light to day, from day to the increasing half, from the increasing half to the six months and to the world of gods, from the world of gods to the sun, from the sun to the place of lightening. When they have thus reached the place of lightening, a spirit comes near them and leads them to the world of *brahman*. In the world of *brahman* they dwell, exalted for ages. There is no returning for them."

    The Way of the Fathers: "But they who conquer the world by means of sacrifice, charity and austerity go to smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the decreasing half of the moon, from the decreasing half of the moon to the six months when the sun goes to the South, from these six months to the world of Fathers, from the world of

Fathers to the moon. Having reached the moon, they become food, and then Gods feed on them here, as sacrifices feed on Soma as it increases and decreases. But when this (the result of the works on earth) cease they return again to the ether, from ether to the air, from the air to rain, from rain to the earth. And when they have reached the earth, they become food, and they are offered again in the altar-fire, which is man, and thence are born in the fire of women. Thus they rise up towards the worlds and go to the same rounds as before."

40. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 5.11.12. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (5.7) tells us:

    Some go into a womb
    For the embodiment of a corporeal being.
    Others go into a stationary thing
    According to their deeds, according to their knowledge.

41. *Yogavasiṣṭha*, 5.71.65, 67; *Bhagavadgītā*, chap. 2.
42. *Yogasūtra*, 4.7.
43. *Visuddhimagga*, chap. 8: "Strictly speaking, the duration of the life of a living being is exceedingly brief, lasting only while a thought lasts. Just as chariot-wheel in rolling rolls only at one point of the tyre, and in resting rests at one point, in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as the thought has ceased, the living being is said to have ceased. The being of a past moment of thought has lived, but does not live, nor does it live. The being of a future moment of thought will live, but has not lived, nor does it live. The being of a present moment of thought does live, but has not lived, nor will it live."
44. The following is the summary of the process of re-becoming in terms of causalty. This is how Paul Carus has summarised it: "In the beginning there is existence blind and without knowledge; and in the sea of ignorance there are stirrings of formative organism. From this there arises awareness which begets organism that live as individual beings. These develop into six fields, that is, the five senses and the mind. The six fields come in contact with things. Contact begets senses and the mind. Contact begets sensation that creates the thirst for individualised being. This creates a clinging to things that produce the growth and continuation of selfhood. Selfhood continues the renewed births. These renewed births of selfhood are the cause of suffering, old age, sickness, and death. They produce lamentation, anxiety and despair." *The Gospel of the Buddha*, Chicago, 1917, p. 40.
45. The Buddha, at the time of salvific enlightenment, found out that desire was the source of suffering, and therefore of becoming. In the *Dhammapada* (v. 216) we read:

From grief craving arises,
From craving arises fear,
For him who is from craving free
There is no grief, then whence come fear?

46. *Mohamudgara*, v. 1.
47. Upadeśasāhasrī, 2.1.3-4. The Wheel of Time, which expresses itself in terms of *karma-saṃsāra*, is difficult to overcome. Its terror leaves none. In the *Yogavasiṣṭha* (1. 23. 4) Time is linked to a submarine: "There is nothing here in the universe that all-voracious time does not devour, like the submarine fire (that swallows) the overflowing ocean."
48. Cf. *Saṃyuttanikāya*, 2.117.
49. *Yogavasiṣṭha*, 1.23.4; cf. *Mahābhārata* (11.2.24): "Time cooks (all) beings. Time destroys (all) creatures. (When all else is) asleep, time is awake. Time is hard to overcome."
50. The salvific goal of a Yogī is to realise the state of timelessness in terms of which the cycle of rebirth is overcome. Insofar as Time is allowed to operate, sorrow and pain will inevitably follow each other. Therefore, the transcendence of Time is the main goal of a Yogī. "One who reverences time," according to the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (6.14-16), "as *brahman*, from him time withdraws afar." Not to be touched by the ravages of Time, a Yogī withdraws into himself, and in doing so he saves himself from its curse. The *Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā* (6.108) tells us that "a Yogī who is yoked through enstasy . . . is not devoured by time." Time expresses itself through the flow of events, viz., through *saṃsāra*. It is *saṃsāra* that gives birth to Time, as the very root of *saṃsāra* (*sr* = to flow) connotes Time. They who overcome the flow of events are called the *kālātīta*, viz., the killers of Time. The primordial non-time is timelessness (*akāla*). It is the realisation of timelessness that a Yogī finds his true vocation.
51. The essence of Buddhist compassion consists of the following axioms: "Let no one deceive another. Let him not despise (another) in any place. Let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another. As a mother, at the risk of her life, watches over her own child, her only child, so also let everyone cultivate a boundless friendly mind towards all beings." *Suttanipāta*, 1.8.6.
52. The term *kleśa* comes from the root *kliṣ*, meaning "to cause suffering."
53. *Yogasūtra*, 2.4.
54. *Tattvavaiśāradī*, 2.2: "The operation of *kriyā-yoga* is only effecting the attenuation (*pratanu*) and not the sterilisation of these afflictions. . . . For, if the afflictions are not attenuated, insight (*khāyti*) into the distinction between the personality-essence (*sattva*) and the Self (*puruṣa*) . . . is incapable of arising, still less of rendering these afflictions sterile."

55. Cf. S. Rohde, *Deliver us from Evil: Studies on the Vedic Ideas of Salvation*, Lund, 1946.
56. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.3.7-8. Although the orthodox Brāhmaṇism did not seek so much immortality as much as liberation from the termporal sequence of rebirth, yet it cannot be denied that the quest for bodily immortality did not die completely. The Yoga of Patañjali sought freedom from cyclical rebirth, but some fringe schools of Yoga in medieval period revived the ancient quest for immortality of the body. Thus there are certain Tantric schools that have engaged in alchemical quest for physical immortality.
57. *Yogasūtra*, 4.34.
58. *Udāna*, v. 80. The Buddhist idea of liberation as *nirvāṇa* is equated to the cessation of suffering, which in turn corresponds to the realisation of the emptiness of self (*pudgala-śūnyatā*). For the Mahāyānists liberation as *nirvāṇa* also includes the realisation of the emptiness of objectivity (*dharma-śūnyatā*). The word *nirvāṇa* means that which "blows out," as of a flame. Whatever be its lexical meaning, it is certain that *nirvāṇa* denotes cessation. See *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 1.136.
59. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.14; cf. *Ātmabodha*, vv. 51-52: "Relinquishing attachment to the unreal external happiness, the self-abiding *jīvanmukta*, satisfied with the bliss derived from the Self, shines inwardly, like a lamp placed in a jar."
60. *Yogavasiṣṭha*, 5.77.7, 20.
61. Analysing the totalistic view of liberation, Radhakrishnan points out that "Life eternal is not in the future time. Every moment we stand on the frontier of time. Release is not a state after death but the supreme status of being unconditioned by its manifestation, able to assume forms at pleasure." *Brahmasūtra*, London, 1960, p. 215.
62. *Bhagavadgītā*, 2.56-57; *Yogavasiṣṭha*, 5.77.8-9, 11, 14, 19-20.

3

The Yoga of Patañjali

It is Patañjali (400 BC) who is considered as the real systematiser of the techniques of meditation. The text he composed, namely, the *Yogasūtra*, presents, as it were, culmination of mystical spirituality whose roots go back to the prehistorical period of India. Whatever new literature, after Patañjali, concerning the techniques of meditation came into being, it did not receive the same kind of recognition or imprimatur or authority as the *Yogasūtra*. This is so because the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali became the basis and foundation for the later mystical literature that various schools of Yoga produced.

We know very little concerning the life of Patañjali. As no biographical material is available concerning Patañjali, so whatever is written about him is mainly conjectural. Since the life of Patañjali is hidden behind the veil of obscurity, it is, thus, natural that there would be controversy among the scholars as to whether such a person really existed. It is this uncertainty of knowledge that many scholars even suspect as to whether it would be right to ascribe the authorship of the *Yogasūtra* to such a person whose historicity itself is suspect. It is not definitely known whether the same Patañjali composed the text of the *Yogasūtra* who composed the fomous commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the grammar of Pāṇini or by some other Patañjali. There are some Indian commentators who think that it is the grammarian Patañjali who composed the text of the *Yogasūtra*. Some modern scholars, like Garbe and Dasgupta, have accepted this traditional viewpoint concerning the authorship

of the text of Yoga. There are other scholars, like Keith and Woods, who have challenged this standopoint. Whatever be the truth concerning the authorship of the text of *Yogasūtra*, the controversy is not so important as would cause hindrance in understanding the actual essence of Yoga. What, however, is undeniable is the fact that, whoever may have been the real author of the text of the *Yogasūtra*, the yogic techniques of meditative introversion belong to antiquity and are specifically Indian in origin.

Even if Patañjali is accepted as the real author of the *Yogasūtra*, it is, however, difficult to say as to whether he is responsible in having composed the entire text or parts of it. It must be kept in mind that Patañjali is not the first inventor or creator of the system of Yoga. Prior to Patañjali, the elements of Yoga are found in profusion in the Upaniṣadic texts. Patañjali himself admits the fact that he has only edited and systematised the already existent yogic methods.[1] Insofar as the philosophical content of Yoga is concerned, Patañjali depends solely upon one of the oldest systems of thought, namely, the Sāṃkhya system.[2]

The Text of the Yogasūtra

The text of the *Yogasūtra*, if considered in itself, is very abstruse, ambiguous and difficult to understand. It is because of the abstruseness of the text that Barth spoke of the Yoga system as "the most eccentric of the philosophic systems."[3] It is because of this abstruseness of the text that a number of outstanding commentaries have been written on it—and this tradition is still continuing. The text would be unintelligible if read in isolation. In order to understand as to what the text actually is saying, one has to seek the help of the various commentaries that have been written from time to time. The text of the *Yogasūtra* is written in what is known as the *sūtra* style, viz., aphorisitc style, which is so brief in its expression that it is in need of a lengthy explanation. The text in its present form consists of one hundred ninety-five aphorisms. There are some editors, however, who opine that the actual number of aphorisms is only on hundred ninety-four. Whatever be the truth concerning the actual number of aphorisms, the text

that is commonly used these days contains one hundred ninety-five aphorisms. These one hundred ninety-five aphorisms of the text have been divided into four chapters (*pāda*), and the chapters are:

1. *Samādhi-pāda*—chapter on enstasy
2. *Sādhana-pāda*—chapter on practice
3. *Vibhūti-pāda*—chapter on occult powers
4. *Kaivalya-pāda*—chapter on liberation

Each chapter of the text concerns itself with a specific topic. The first chapter—the *Samādhi-pāda*—consists of fifty-one aphorisms. It is in this chapter that the real issues, metaphysical as well practical, pertaining to Yoga have been discussed. A thorough analysis is offered with regard to the various mystical experiences that a Yogī, while ascending the yogic ladder, undergoes. The aim of yogic mystical experience is not so much to experience the intimacy of union with God or submergence in the Absolute as much it is to disengage the self-monad (*puruṣa*) from Nature (*prakṛti*) in terms of the attainment of the state of "isolation" (*kaivalya*). Insofar as the second chapter is concerned, namely, the *Sādhana-pāda*, it consists of fifty-five aphorisms. The very title informs us that this chapter should be dealing with such introversive methods that would enable a Yogī to reach the soteric state of isolation, or what is called the indeterminate state of being (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*). The methods are so devised as would result in the introversion of consciousness, which at the same time terminate in the withdrawal of consciousness from that that is outside it. The aim of the methods, on the one hand, is to lead to the state of abstract absorption and, on the other hand, effect discontinuity between consciousness and the world by turning consciousness inward. The third chapter, called the *Vibhūti-pāda*, consists of fifty-five aphorisms. The chapter concentrates itself on the acquirement of occult powers that are bound to occur if the yogic path of mental discipline is cultivated diligently. It is *a priori* assumed that the acquirement of occult powers will eventuate provided the adept follows the prescribed yogic path in accordance with the rules that have been formulated

in the *Yogasūtra*. One, however, is also warned that spiritual retrogression will occur if these powers are misused. The last chapter, namely, the *Kaivalya-pāda*, consists of only thirty-four aphorisms, and so is the smallest one among all the chapters. The aim of this chapter is to explain the soteric goal of Yoga, which is the attainment of the state of "isolation," viz., the state in which the Self, by abiding in its own-being, remains completely detached from all the levels of existence. This complete detachment of the Self is equated with the soteric freedom from the cycle of rebirth.

Many eyebrows have been raised concerning the classification of the chapters.[4] It is believed that the text of the *Yogasūtra* cannot be treated as a single piece of literature, which would mean that there must have been some other text upon which the present text has been constructed. It would also mean that the text is not a composition of a single author. Thus quite a number of scholars have engaged themselves in the search of finding out the original text by dissecting the present text into many sub-texts. The analytical dissection has been carried out in the context of the belief that the present text that has come down to us consists of a synthesis of the various traditions of Yoga. Whatever be the truth concerning such an assumption, so far none has succeeded in reconstructing the original text.

There has been a very healthy tradition in India of writing commentaries on texts that are either abstruse or need elaboration in relation to other schools of thought. It is in the context of this general tradition that many valuable, and some of them quite outstanding, commentaries have been written on the text of the *Yogasūtra*. These commentaries have helped in grasping such abstruse thought of the text which otherwise would have remained ununderstandable. The earliest and the most valuable commentary is the *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa. Very little is known about the author of this commentary. The Indian tradition has identified him with the legendary author of the *Mahābhārata*. Vyāsa's commentary is very valuable, in that many difficult *sūtras* of the text have ben explained in an intelligent manner. The next most important commentary is that of Vācaspatimiśra, which is known by the name of *Tattva-*

vaiśāradī. He lived in the ninth century, and is considered one of the greatest intellectual luminaries of India. The gloss of Vācaspatimiśra on the *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa is also an important work, in that it clarifies many key-concepts of Vyāsa.The other important commentary on the *Yogasūtra* is that of Bhoja (eleventh century), namely, the *Rājamārtaṇḍa*. Bhoja is very critical of all those commentaries that had preceded him. According to him, the commentaries written prior to him, at many places and instances, are unreliable. Bhoja himself, however, is quite arbitrary in his interpretations. After Bhoja two very important commentaries were written on the *Yogasūtra* during the sixteenth century. One of them was authored by Rāmānanda, and is known as the *Maṇiprabhā*. The other commentary is that of Vijñānabhikṣu, and is known by the name of the *Yogavārttika*. Vijñānabhikṣu also composed a digest on his own commentary, which is known as the *Yogasāra-saṃgraha*. The most important commentaries that have been composed after Vijñānabhikṣu are: Bhava Gaṇeśa's *Dīpikā*, Nāgeśa's *Chayavyākhya*, Baladeva Miśra's *Pradīpikā*, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha's *Candrikā*, Sadāśiva Indra's *Sudhākara*, Nāgojī Bhaṭṭa's *Vṛtti*, Rāgavānanda's *Patañjali-rahasya*, and Hariharānanda's *Bhāsvati*.

Sāṃkhya versus Yoga

The entire philosophical structure of the Yoga system is based upon the theoretical presuppositions of the Sāṃkhya philosophy (*sāṃkhya-darśana*).[5] The *Yogasūtra*, without any misgiving or apprehension, has accepted wholeheartedly the Sāṃkhya conceptual framework concerning the world, existence, and the ultimate goal of life. The difference between the two systems of thought is with regard to methodology. The other main difference that differentiates one from the other is that the Sāṃkhya is completely atheistic, whereas Yoga accepts the existence of God. The God of Yoga system, however, is not the creator or sovereign ruler of the world. There is hardly any difference between the liberated Self and God. Insofar as the question of methodology is concerned, it may be said that the Sāṃkhya methodology has its source in the scriptural (*śāstra*) tradition, whereas the methodology of Yoga is dependent on

the veracity of mystical experience (*pratyakṣa*).[6] In short, it may be said that the Sāṃkhya methodology is theoretical, whereas that of Yoga is experimental. The differences between the two systems may be summarised thus:

1. The Sāṃkhya, as a purely theoretical system of thought, lays strong emphasis, for the realisation of soteric freedom, upon intellectual apprehension (*viveka*) rather than upon the mystical experience of truth. It believes that it is through intellectual apprehension or discernment that the Self (*puruṣa*) is cognised as being different from the non-self (*prakṛti*). Upon apprehending the difference between the Self, Nature and its evolutes, there occurs the dawning of liberation in terms of which the Self no more remains bound to the operations of Nature, which at the same time means the abiding of the Self in its own-being. The Yoga of Patañjali, on the contrary, believes that truth is apprehended by turning consciousness inward and the inwardness of consciousness means of reaching the state of enstasy. It is in and through the mystical enstasy that there eventuates the soteric liberation in terms of which the Self no more is entangled with the workings of Nature or with its evolutes. The Yoga firmly adheres to the conviction that the intellectual knowledge is not a sufficient guarantee for the removal of the veils of ignorance. What is of importance is to experience existentially the state of trans-consciousness.
2. The Sāṃkhya, being completely atheistic, feels no need to postulate God as the ultimate reference point for man. The Yoga system, unlike the Sāṃkhya, believes in God, but the God it believes in is not different from the Self that has achieved the enstatic state of liberative isolation. It would mean that the God of Yoga does not share the same characteristics that a theistic God has. Rather he is like any other autonomous Self who is free from the afflictions of the embodied existent.[7]

Whenever Sāṃkhya as a theoretical system of thought is referred to, it must be remembered that it was Īśvarakṛṣṇa

who, in his *Sāṃkhya-kārikā,* propounded the post-Patañjali Sāṃkhya. Most probably the text of the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* was composed either in the fourth or in the fifth century. It is the Sāṃkhya system of Īśvarakṛṣṇa that seems to have held sway over the popular imagination till the time of Śaṃkara (788-820). After Śaṃkara, the influence of the Sāṃkhya began to decline till the fifteenth century. Aniruddha and Vijñānabhikṣu, through their commentaries, revived it again in the sixteenth century.

The pre-Patañjali Sāṃkhya has its conceptual source in the Vedas as well as in the Upaniṣads. Being part and parcel of the Upaniṣadic conceptual framework, it is but natural for the Sāṃkhya to agree with the basic theoretical assumptions as well as insights of the Upaniṣads. The earliest traces of the Sāṃkhya are contained in the *Ṛgveda*[8] itself. In the *Ṛgveda* the proto-Sāṃkhya theory of causation (*satkāryavāda*) is being adumbrated. Also some of the Sāṃkhya elements are found in 10.72 and 108.90 of the *Ṛgveda.*

It is in the Upaniṣads of the Middle Period that the theoretical concepts of the Sāṃkhya are given prominence. For the first time the bi-polar notion of the Sāṃkhya concerning the nature of Reality is openly discussed in the Upaniṣadic texts of this period. Although the direct use of Sāṃkhya terminology may not be found in these texts, yet the fact remains that they expound a kind of thinking that is peculiarly Sāṃkhyan in orientation. This assumption is affirmed when we read, for example, the following statement of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad:*

> The Self (*puruṣa*) is the seed-giver and the imperishable (*akṣara*) is the womb.[9]

The Self and the Womb are the poles of Reality, which in Sāṃkhya terminology would mean the two antithetical principles of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti.* This dialectic of Self and Nature would ultimately transform itself in Tantricism into male-female principles. It is this bi-polar idea of Reality that gains clarity in the *Mahābhārata,*[10] which ultimately finds its full expression in the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* of Iśvarakṛṣṇa.

The Sāṃkhya is in complete agreement with the Upaniṣadic assertion that the conditioned is evidently characterised by suffering. It is such an experiential evident fact of life that there is no need to prove its factuality. Where the Sāṃkhya differs from the Upaniṣadic non-dualism is in its philosophical dualism and in terms of which it looks at reality as consisting of two antithetical polarities, namely; *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. For the Sāṃkhya the Self (*puruṣa*), who essentially is free and unconditioned, becomes subject to the conditioned mode of life as and when it gets involved with Matter. As to how the Self gets involved with Matter has not so far been explained satisfactorily. Since the involvement of the Self with Matter means the emergence of suffering, so the aim of Yoga is to free the Self from its entanglement with Matter, and also from suffering, which, theologically speaking, means to discover an unconditioned mode of existence. It is the soteriological search for freedom from suffering that has determined the common spiritual goal both of the Upaniṣads and of Sāṃkhya. Insofar as interpretation of this soteric freedom is concerned, both of them differ from each other, in that for the former it means the realisation of the unity of Being, whereas for the latter freedom is understood in terms of isolation. Both of them, however, seek to reach the soteirc goal of freedom through what may be called intellectual intuition. Insofar as Yoga is concerned, it wants to realise the state of isolation by turning consciousness inward—and this inwardness of consciounsess is achieved by following the techniques of meditation that Yoga has devised.

It is this perception of phenomenal existence as consisting of pain that has determined the general spiritual outlook and ethos of all Indians' religious schools of thought. And Buddha has beautifully expressed this spiritual orientation of the Indians by saying that "All is pain, all is transient." Patañjali after Buddha has affirmed this tragic insight by saying: "For the sage everything is suffering."[11] It is this anguished cry that echoes and reverberates through all the philosophical and religious texts of India. A religious view, a philosophical theory, a spiritual method is considered useful to the extent it helps man/woman to overcome, nay transcend, the

phenomenal pain. Knowledge for its own sake has no value. Real and authentic knowledge is that that serves man/woman fruitfully, which to an Indian means the attainment of soteric freedom. It is this perception that made Aniruddha comment the followlng:

> The body is pain, because it is the place of pain; the senses, objects, perceptions are suffering, because they lead to suffering; pleasure itself is suffering, because it is followed by suffering.[12]

This vision of life—that all is pain—can be interpreted both in terms of pessimism and optimism. One's interpretation of this vision is dependent on the kind of mental dispositions, the mind entertains. It can be argued that such an understanding of life takes away all the zest or vitality for living. Instead of making life worth living, it rather makes it more hopeless by evading, through mystical subterfuge, the real problems of life. In not confronting the problems of life, solutions too evade, and thereby also no effort is made at making life better and worth living. Mere escape from the world will not lessen the burden of pain. It can, however, equally be argued that the experiences of life teach that no endeavour, however sincere it may be, ever succeeds in lessening the burden of pain, because the very structure of phenomenal life is characterised by pain. It is this realisation of life as pain that should give birth to a dispassionate disposition whereby real search for that mode of existence may become possible that is free from pain. Since man has the possibility of freeing himself from the circuit of pain, so he must aspire for a conditionless mode of existence. It can, therefore, be said that this view of life is as much pessimistic as it is optimistic. It is pessimistic in the sense of looking at life in the world in terms of pain. Such a view definitely results in what may be called the existential lethargy. Such a view can equally be said to be optimistic in the sense that, while recognising the facts of life as they are, it does not evade the uncomfortable questions of life. While understanding life to be tragic, it thereby endeavours for a mode of life that is free from the painful accretion of pain of phenomenality.

The positive aspect of this view of life has given rise to a search for such a kind of knowledge[13] that leads to the real freedom, and freedom is understood in terms of cessation of pain. It is through the attainment of non-discursive intuitive knowledge that man comes to know the real character of the world, which is that of transiency. That which is transient can never ultimately be real. If the transient world were considered to be really real, then there would be no possibility of gaining freedom from it. Since the possibility for freedom exists, it means that the world is only apparent and not ultimately real. It is through intuitive gnosis that man is enabled to make necessary discrimination between the real and the unreal, and the actualisation of this discriminatory knowledge denotes the dawning in man of what may be called the spiritual awakening. Such a status is accorded to intuitive knowledge because it tears to pieces the paingiving structures that are given rise to by ignorance (*avidyā*). As and when ignorance is referred to, it basically means erroneous knowledge about the nature of Reality, and in our case it refers to the imperfect knowledge about the Self. It is ignorance that is responsible in identifying the Self with the psychosomatic make up of an individual, and thereby with experiences that belong to this psychosomatic individual. It is this false superimposition of psychosomatic experiences upon the Self that gives rise to suffering. However, once the authentic nature of the Self is known, there is illumination, and thereby freedom from pain is realised.

It is the Sāṃkhya conception of life that forms the background of Yoga. The Yoga system, like the Sāṃkhya, thinks that pain can be removed the moment mental confusion, caused by ignorance, is eliminated. The Yoga system employs such ascetical practices and meditation techniques that make the removal of confusion possible.

The Nature of Reality

The Yoga system completely adheres to the Sāṃkhya bi-polar view of Reality, and it is in terms of the bipolarity of Reality that the entire manifestational process of phenomena is explained. Reality, being bi-polar, consists of two eternal

principles, namely, the Self (*puruṣa*) and the primordial Nature (*pradhāna* or *mūla-prakṛti*). Both these categories represent the subjective and the objective aspects of Reality. As independent, they do not depend upon each other for their existence. They exist eternally as well as independently. Their very autonomous existence means that they function independently. The objective aspect of Reality (*prakṛti*) is as real as is the subjective one (*puruṣa*). Thus the Yoga system, like the Sāṃkhya, interprets Reality in terms of a dualism that is redical and unbridgeable. It is radical because both the Self and Nature are antithetical to each other, which means that there is no possibility for occurring of any kind of relationship between them. As opposites, they cannot co-exist. Even when the Self leads an embodied existence, its relationship with Matter is tenuous. As the very basis of metaphysical thinking of Yoga is rooted in dualism, so it is but natural for it to opt for pluralism of the selves. Unlike the Advaita Vedānta, which believes in a single ontological ground called the Self, the Yoga system thinks that there are as many selves as there are existents. Even though there may be a plurality of selves, yet all of them participate in a single essence. It is the quantitative difference that constitutes the diversity of the selves. Qualitatively, however, all the selves have a single essence. Thus we may say that all the selves are identical insofar as their essential nature is concerned, and it becomes quite evident that all of them attain to the state of omniscience and omnipresence upon becoming free from Matter and its evolutes.

The transcendent selves constitute one aspect of Reality. The other aspect of Reality consists of primordial Nature or what is called *prakṛti*. The term *prakṛti* itself indicates its generative or creative nature, in that the term basically means that "which brings forth." Accordingly *prakṛti* has been spoken of as "creatrix." It is therefore natural to view *prakṛti* as the transcendental source for the multiple objects of the world as well as of the world itself. This linking of *prakṛti* with generation becomes quite explicit in later schools of thought when God's Creative Power (*Śakti*) is identified with Nature. Thus such terms as *māyā* and *śakti* have been used as synonyms for *prakṛti*. In its undifferentiated aspect *prakṛti*, as womb,

contains within itself the creative seeds which she emits out of itself as the objective world. It is this understanding of Nature that led to its deification, and thereby to its identification with the Goddess in popular Hinduism as well as in such antinomian cults as, for example, Tantricism. It is as Goddess that Nature is seen as the very source of existence, and so is ascribed with such creative powers that are needed for effecting the emergence of the flow of the world of becoming.

As far as the emergence of the objective world from the undifferentiated state of Nature is concerned, it takes place in accordance with its own plan. The theory of evolutionary emergence of the objective world is based upon the idea that which is inside is also outside. This idea, when explained in terms of causation, is expressed through the theory of what is called the *satkāryavāda* or the *pariṇāmavāda*. The theory explains that the effect, prior to its actualisation, exists in the cause, which means that the effect is identical with the cause. The effect, according to this view, is nothing but the modification of the cause. Thus this doctrine has a realistic view of causation. It believes that the effect is real in the sense that it is nothing but the actual modification of the cause. What this theory attempts to propound is the idea that whatever emerges or comes into being need not be considered a new product, or distinct from the cause. Rather the emergent object, or the object that has emerged, is but the actualisation (*āvirbhāva*) of what was already existing potentially in Nature. Insofar as the destruction of an object is concerned, it is believed that no destruction of the object occurs; rather the object returns, upon its so-called external destruction, to its original or what is called the latent state. It is simply called the process of disappearance (*tirobhāva*) and not that of destruction.

Alongside the theory of transformation of *prakṛti* into the various evolutes or categories of existence (*tattva*), the Sāṃkhya also gave birth to a peculiar theory of reals (*guṇa*). The reals stand for an irreducible ultimacy of the cosmos. The reals are the primary constituents of all material as well as of mental factors. Each factor, whether material or mental, is dominated by one of the three constituents—and the constituents are of

the nature of peace (*sattva*), of passion (*rajas*), and of dullness (*tamas*). The function of the peaceful constituent is to illumine, as the very meaning of the term, which is that of beingness, makes it quite explicit. The term *rajas* is derived from the root *raj*, which means "to be excited." When the state of *rajas* is predominant, it indicates excitation, mobility, agitation, and so on. The *tamas* denotes "to be exhausted," "to be constricted," etc. As such it signifies inertial or dull state. The function of each constituent is described in the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* thus:

> The *guṇas* are of the nature of joy, joylessness and dejection and have the purpose of illuminating, activating and restricting. They overbear each other, are independent and productive and cooperative in their activities.[14]

The function of *sattva* is to illumine and to give rise to a joy that has the fragrance of peace and not of excitement. The constituent of *rajas*, in contrast to that of *sattva*, is responsible in giving rise to mobility, to excitement, which means it is a state in which stillness of peace is absent. Insofar as *tamas* is concerned, it functions as a means for concealment, and so may be equated to the darkness that ignorance gives rise to. It is these three constituents that, as it were, not only govern the cosmos, but also have been so psychologised as to give rise to human typology. A person of peaceful temper is equated with the strand of *sattva*, whereas a person of action is spoken of as being dominated by the *rajas* strand. Likewise a person of degenerate nature is spoken of as being under the influence of *tamas*. One among these three strands of Nature, as it were, is responsible in determining human character. Man is what he is—good, passionate or bad—in terms of the influence a particular strand exerts upon him. Insofar as man remains under the influence either of the strands of *rajas* or *tamas*, to that extent he will be unable to cultivate the path of Yoga, which is that of total withdrawal. The Yoga, thus, aims at the natural man, viz., man as he exists in the world. It is not the realm of grace with which Yoga concerns itself. The path of Yoga is that of self-effort, and it is through self-exertion that man has the possibility of transforming himself into a seeker

of salvation. Some later yogic schools, although not totally discarding the way of self-exertion, have felt the need of divine grace as a means of overcoming hurdles in the path of spirituality. Insofar as Yoga itself is concerned, it does not seek divine grace as a means of reaching the soteric goal of liberation.

The phenomenal process of manifestation occurs due to the interplay among the strands of Nature. As and when the phenomenal manifestation is initiated, there occurs a corresponding activity that facilitates the process of manifestation to pass through four stages, which may be linked to the four manifestational stages of the Word in Tantricism. The four manifestational stages of the Word are the transcendent word (*parā-vāk*), seeing (*paśyanti*), middling (*madhyamā*), and the gross (*vaikharī*). Insofar as Yoga is concerned, it thinks that prior to the manifestation of the object, it has to pass through four stages, which are distinct from each other and are hierarchical in structure. The stages of manifestation are determined by the predominance of the one or the other strand among the three strands of Nature. The levels of manifestation are:

1. The undifferentiated—*āliṅga*
2. The differentiated—*liṅgamātra*
3. The unparticularised—*aviśeṣa*
4. The particularised—*viśeṣa*

The first level of manifestation signifies the primordial or undifferentiated state of Nature. It is an unmanifest condition, and so may be equated to a pure state of potentiality. The second level of manifestation terminates in the emergence of what may be viewed as the "first-born" of Nature. From a subjective point of view, it is spoken of as the principle of I-am-ness (*asmitā*). Upon reaching the stage of I-am-ness, there occurs further push to the proccess of manifestation in terms of emergence of the five subtle or energetic structures (*tanmātras*). These five subtle factors are responsible in giving rise to the five elements (*bhūta*), the ten senses and the mind. In this manner the processes of phenomenal manifestation of

Nature eventuates, in that it constitutes the totality of Nature both in manifest (*vyakta*) and unmanifest (*avyakta*) conditions.

As far the selves in their transcendent state are concerned, they are outside the realm of Nature. They abide in their own-being, which means that their essential nature consists of in pure awareness. When, however, the selves get associated with a particular conglomeration of Matter, there is the emergence of conscious beings. It is due to the association (*saṃyoga*) with Matter that the selves somehow forget their essential nature. Due to this forgetfulness, the Self considers itself as a conditioned creature. It is this association of the Self with Matter that Yoga tries to break up by employing the techniques of meditation. The techniques help the Yogī in eliminating the erroneous identification of the Self with Matter.

The Nature of the Self

All the Indian schools of philosophy accept the existence of the transcendent and autonomous Self. The Buddhists and the Materialists (Cārvāka) are the exception, in that both of them reject the existence of the transcendent Self as the ground of phenomenality. Insofar as the Sāṃkhya and Yoga is concerned, they accept the existence of the Self not as an ontological ground of existence, but as an independent principle that somehow or the other gets involved with materiality. The Self of the Sāṃkhya or of Yoga is not differnt from the Self of the Upaniṣads insofar as its character is concerned. Like the Self of the Upaniṣads, the Self of the Sāṃkhya too is devoid of attributes, and as such abides in its own-being. In other words, the Sāṃkhyan Self is non-relational. As transcendent, it has to be inexpressible, and so cannot at all be reached through the intellect.[15] Īśvarakṛṣṇa, the author of the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, defines the Self as that principle that "sees (*sākṣin*); it is isolated (*kaivalyaṃ*); indifferent, mere inactive spectator."[16] This definition explicitly tells us that the Self is impersonal, and so has no possibility of relating, in any form, with anything whether it be material objects or other selves. As the Self is seen as an inactive principle or a mere spectator, it means that it is completely devoid of the power of intellection

(*ciddharma*).[17] An impersonal Self can neither have desires nor suffer the pangs of psychosomatic experiences. If this is the case, then the question may be asked as to why the Self is experienced as being the doer (*kartṛ*) of deeds? The explanation that is offered is in terms of the theory of ignorance (*avidyā*).The imputation of the functions of the so-called empirical ego (*ahaṃkāra*) upon the inactive Self is due to ignorance—and ignorance consists of in not knowing the actual nature of the Self. In other words, ignorance consists of in imputing the attributes of Matter (*prakṛti*) upon the Self.[18] The cause of this superimposition, although located in ignorance, stems from the Self's proximity to intelligence (*buddhi*), and the intelligence, although the most pure product of *prakṛti*, is yet a product of *prakṛti*. As such it is intelligence that is seen the actual troublemaker. Accordingly Patañjali speaks of this erroneous superim-position thus: "The Self, though free from inter-mixture, appearing to take the form (of intelligence), perceives its own intellect."[19]

While commenting on the above *sūtra* of the *Yogasūtra*, Vācaspatimiśra says the following:

> The Self's apprehension of its own cognition comes about when the mind takes its form, viz., when the mind becomes the substratum of the reflection of the Self, and as such takes its form, as, for example, even without any action of the moon, the clear rippling water reflecting the disc of the moon, manifests the moon also as moving; in the same manner, even without any action of the Self itself, the mind reflecting the Self makes the Self *appear as* being active in (mind's) action, etc., and the mind attaining its character of the experienced, endows the Self with the character of the experiencer.[20]

The ignorance, of which embodied existents are victims, lies in relating the Self, which essentially is non-relational, with the product of Nature, namely, intelligence (*buddhi*). It is through this association that the characteristics of the latter are imposed upon the former. It is because of ignorance that the transient (*anitya*), impure (*aśuci*), painful (*duḥkha*) and the non-self (*anātman*) are imputed with permanence, purity, blissfulness, and with Selfhood. As reasoning, cognitive

perception and memory belong to intelligence, so they, too, on account of ignorance, are being superimposed upon an indifferent and inactive Self.

The problem of Self's involvement with materiality as well as with the products of Nature is so intractable that no solution seems to be in the offing. Whatever solutions have so far been offered are not convincing, but are circular in nature. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga, at the outset, accept the non-relational nature of the Self. If the Self is non-relational, then how does the Self become entangled with Matter, viz., how does it become embodied? The association of the Self with Matter, according to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga reasoning, occurs due to the former's proximity to intelligence. But this cannot be so because of intelligence being an evolute of Matter, even though it may be a refined one. As a product of Matter, intelligence has the power of forming cognitive relations with other phenomena, which too are material categories. Since intelligence is dissimilar to the supersensuous Self, so it has no possibility of forming any kind of actual relation with the Self. There seems to be no solution of the problem in sight. In order to overcome this logical impasse, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga has maintained that the transcendental knowledge of Reality is revealed to the one who has gone beyond the operations of conditional knowledge, which is dependent upon intelligence. Since ultimate knowledge is in terms of revelation, it means that intelligence has no role to play in the acquirement of this knowledge on account of it being non-conceptual. It is upon the attainment of this non-conceptual knowledge, so assert the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, that the riddle of how the Self gets involved with Matter is solved.

The Nature of Primordial Matter

The *Yagasūtra*, being basically a practical guide, does not at all concern itself with the analysis of Nature (*prakṛti*). The author of this text follows faithfully the Sāṃkhya version of Nature. However, the text of *Yogasūtra* does concern itself minutely with the description of the three constituents (*guṇa*) of Nature[21] as well as with the kind of relationship that occurs between the constituents and the psychosomatic forms of life.[22]

The primordial Matter (*prakṛti*), apart from the Self (*puruṣa*), forms the other pole of Reality, and so is as real and eternal as is the Self. Unlike the Self, the Primordial Matter, when in the state of manifestation, is active, dynamic and, because of its dynamism, the evolutionary process of manifestation of phenomena is actualised. Nature, in its unmanifest state, remains in the state of passivity. The movement of dynamism in Matter is initiated that very moment when there occurs disturbance, and thereby disharmony, in the peaceful coexistence among the three constituents, which are the peaceful, the passionate and the inertial. When there is peace among the three constituents, then Nature, along with its evolutes, reverts to its unmanifest or latent state, and in this state Nature is totally motionless or inert. Initiation of movement in Matter begins with the disturbance among the three constituents, and begins consequently the process of phenomenal manifestation, which expresses itself through three different ways, namely, the peaceful, the passionate and the inertial.[23] The peaceful way of manifestation is characterised by the essence of luminosity, which is the sysmbol of intelligence. The passionate process of manifestation expresses itself in terms of movement, which denotes dynamic activity. The density of darkness dominates the inertial process of manifestation. It needs however to be kept in mind that the constituents should not be seen as being distinct or apart from Matter. In whatever form or way Nature may manifest itself, the presence of all the three constituents is simultaneous. When there is perfect harmony among the constituents, there is no process of phenomenal manifestation of any kind whatsoever. When the equilibrium among the three constituents is disturbed by the predominance of one over the other two, there is initiated the process of manifestation of Matter.[24]

Matter, in its unmanifest state, is characterised by inertness (*jaḍatva*), and so accordingly is termed as being an undifferentiated mass. It is undifferentiated because the diversity, which is the bane of phenomenality, has not yet been initiated. It is inert because there is no movement in it towards differentiation and in terms of which categories of existence are actualised. It is the imbalance among the constituents that

initiates the project for diversification of Matter into what is called the phenomenal multiplicity. The first evolute that results from the disturbance or imbalance among the constituents is that of intelligence (*buddhi*), which is the most refined, and which accordingly is considered as the generic being-consciousness. It is so because intelligence reflects the revealing luminosity of consciousness. Were not intelligence luminous, there would be no possibility of the revelation of knowledge, whether empirical or transcendental. Since intelligence is luminous, so the possibility of knowledge is turned into an actuality. In its cosmic aspect, intelligence is spoken of as the Great (*mahat*), and as an evolute it is said to be a pure energetic mass (*tanmātra*).[25] It is the preponderance of peaceful constituent that is found in this evolute. Due to the transformative (*pariṇāma*) dynamism of evolution, the proccess of manifestation of Matter passes from the state of Great to the principle of individuation (*ahaṃkāra*). The principle of individuation comes to be on account of the predominance of the passionate constituent, which is that of *rajas*. It is so because ego, like *rajas*, is active and always on the run. It is on account of the sense of individuality that the embodied existent thinks of itself as being the experiencer of both joyful and painful experiences, as being the doer of various deeds. This ego, as it were, is thought of as the basis of self-identity, nay identity itself. Even though there may be change everywhere, yet this ego is seen to be existing as a principle of permanency. However, the appearance of the evolute of individuation is considered as an apperceptive mass without a conscious ego. It is a stage of evolution in which the ego appears as a potentiality rather than an actuality. It is upon the appearance of other categories or factors of existence that the potential ego transforms itself into an actuality. And the actualisation of ego occurs when the constituent of dullness (*tamas*) dominates the process of manifestation. It is at the stage of individuation that the constituent of dullness comes to the fore, and on account of dullness the process of manifestation bifurcates towards two directions: towards the appearance of the subjective and the objective forms of phenomena. The appearance of subjective phenomena is characterised by the

manifestation of the five senses of perception, the five senses of action, and the mind. The objective manifestation of Nature expresses itself in terms of the appearance of five potentials (*tanmātra*), which, when condensed, give rise to the five elements (*bhūta*) of earth, fire, water, air, and space. Both the subjective and the objective forms of manifestation, in fact, are the self-emission of Nature. Consciousness, in the context of this phenomenal manifestation of Nature, is considered as the epiphenomenon of transcendent awareness, which is the Self.

At this point it is necessary to take into consideration the function of the ego, or what is commonly called the principle of individuation. It is so called because it is the ego due to which are integrated various kinds of cognitive and conative experiences. Thus ego is ascribed with the function of integration. As a principle of integration, it is considered as the ground of identity and continuity. This is how the people in general understand the character or nature of ego. Insofar as the Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy is concerned, it considers intelligence as the first maifestational product of Nature. Intelligence, in its cosmic aspect, is termed as the Great. It is intelligence that is seen as the link between the undifferentiated Nature, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the manifest or differentiated phenomena. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinks that the necessary potential seeds of material and psychic realities exist within intelligence. As the container or storehouse of all subliminal impressions (*saṃskāra*), intelligence thereby is seen as representing consciousness in its generic form. It is intelligence in which are fused both the subjective and the objective phenomena. Intelligence also functions as a homogeneous field for certain lower kinds of enstatic experiences (*samādhi*). These lower enstatic experiences are characterised by a relative fusion between the object and the subject.

The actual process of objective differentiation of Nature begins at the manifestational level of individuation (*ahaṃkāra*). It is on account of individuation that the five senses of perception, the five senses of action and the mind emerge. As a consequence of this, there also emerge the five corresponding

material element (*bhūta*) and the five subtle counterparts (like, sound, smell, touch, etc.). Not only is the principle of individuation the source of the above evolutes, but also the basis of the individualised mind (*manas*).

The entire conception of the theory of evolution is based on the theory of transformation (*pariṇāma*), which, when analysed, means that the effect already exists in the cause, nay the cause itself transforms into an effect. If this is the case, it would mean that there is no causation. This Sāṃkhya idea of causation has been severely criticised both by the Vedāntins as well as by the Buddhists. For the Vedāntins it would mean that God, as the cause of creation, has transformed itself into the diverse phenomenal categories. Such a transformation into phenomenal diversity would destory the unity and indivisibility of God. Thus this view of causality is not acceptable to the Vedāntins. Insofar as the Buddhists, particularly of Mahāyāna variety, are concerned, they think that the self-transformation of cause into an effect is a meaningless jargon. If the effect is nothing but the transformation of the cause, then no causation has taken place as well as no new product has come into being. It serves no purpose for the object to come into being that already exists. Moreover, real causation occurs when the effect is different from the cause. Since the effect is identical with the cause, so the Sāṃkhya views of causation, assert the Vedāntins as well as the Buddhists, has to be abandoned. Accordingly has this view of causation received drubbing from most of the Indian schools of thought.

Whatever be the reasons for rejecting the Sāṃkhya theory of causation, it cannot be denied that it has exerted tremendous influence upon every school of thought. One of the features of the theory is contained in the very term *pariṇāma*, which is that of development or progression of that that exists. The idea of progression would mean that the theory must never be interpreted in terms of *creatio ex nihilo*. What the theory implies is that Nature manifests that that exists potentially within it. There is nothing new in the manifest universe that did not exist prior to the actual manifestation of phenomena. It means that both the subjective and the objective realities,

prior to their manifestation, existed as potentialities within the womb of Nature. All the existents as potentialities exist eternally in Nature. At the time of final resorption (*mahā-pralaya*) all the existent forms will return to their potential or unmanifest state.

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga understanding of evolution needs to be viewed in the context of its theory of causality. According to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, there is a definite relationship between the cause and its effect. What the cause brings about "is the manifestation or the development of the pre-existing effect."[26]

> Just as the statue, already existing in the block of stone, is only revealed by the sculptor, so the causal entity only engenders the action by which an effect manifests itself, giving the illusion that it exists only in the present moment.[27]

The Polarity of Spirit and Matter

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga metaphysic postulates the two eternal, but dissimilar, entities, namely, Spirit and Matter. As opposites, they have nothing in common. The only commonality between them is their eternity. The Spirit, which is luminous, indifferent, inactive and peaceful, somehow gets itself entangled with Matter. As a result of this involvement the Spirit gets itself encaged within the womb of Matter, which at the practical level of existence, denotes its embodiment. This involvement of Spirit with Matter becomes obvious when the process of phenomenal manifestation of Matter is initiated. Why and how the Self or Spirit gets entangled with Matter is a question that has not so far been explained satisfactorily by the Sāṃkhya-Yoga theoreticians.

Although the Sāṃkhya-Yoga may not have been able to explain the origin or cause of the involvement of the Self with Matter, but it has nevertheless made an attempt to explain the nature of this involvement or relationship. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga believes that the Self's relationship with Matter is not real; rather it is as apparent as is the relationship between an object and its reflection in a mirror or between an object and its shadow. The Self by nature is inactive and indifferent, which means that it is not in its nature to involve itself with that that

is active and dynamic. As an opposite of Matter, there is no possibility for the Self to form any kind of actual relationship with Matter, because relationship occurs between objects that have similar natures. Since the Self has nothing in common with Matter, so to say that it relates itself to Matter is completely fallacious. From this is concluded that if there is any kind of relationship between the two, it has to be an apparent, and not an actual, one.

The empirical consciousness that we know is by nature intentional. An intentional consciousness, according to the Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinking, is the product of Matter, which would be the conclusion, more or less, of modern evolutionists also. It is also the contention of the Materialists, particularly of the Marxian variety, that Matter precedes consciousness, which is to say that consciousness is the result of the evolutionary process of Matter. As a product of Matter, consciousness, in the context of Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinking, is in no way related to the Self, because the Self is not a product of Matter. The Self, as pure awareness, is above and beyond the psychosomatic experience,[28] whereas intentional consciousness operates within the field of mental and physical experiences. Although the Self is a mere spectator or a passive witness, it is, however, reflected in and through the luminosity of intelligence. Intelligence, as already pointed out, is basically the product of Matter, and at that the most refined one. As a refined product of Matter, intelligence thereby is seen as belonging to the subjective or what is called the psychic apparatus of man. Intelligence reflects the Spirit at the moment when the constituent of pure luminosity of clarity (*sattva*) dominates it. When intelligence reflects the Self through its pure mode (*sattva-guṇa*), it should not be construed that the Self's purity is affected. The Self is both like and unlike intelligence. The Self is like intelligence as a knower, as a revealer, but is unlike intelligence when it comes to the question of change. The Self does not undergo any kind of change, which is not the case with intelligence because of it being the product of Matter. Like any other material product, intelligence too suffers from change, because change is inherent to Matter in its manifest condition. The Self, on the contrary, is unchangeable, and as

the knowing subject has the uninterrupted flow of knowledge. What it amounts to saying is that that the Self is identical with knowledge. Like knowledge the Self reveals the knowable, and so as a revealer is seen to be non-different from knowledge. Intelligence, in contrast to the Self, is dominated by the objects of knowledge, which means that there is no possibility for knowledge to emerge unless there is an object of knowledge. Intelligence, thus, is directly dependent upon the object that is to be known. It is the dominance of the object that is responsible in bringing about change in intelligence. Patañjali[29] explains the tenuous character of relationship between the Self and intelligence thus:

> Intelligence reflects the Self in the same manner as a flower is reflected in a crystal. If there is any kind of relationship between the two, it is purely apparent and not real. The relationship owes its existence to a sympathetic correspondence (*yogayatā*) between the two: Self and intelligence.[30]

The apparent relationship between the two has its origin in eternity. This apparent relationship is characterised by an orientation in which the attributes of intelligence, on account of the working of ignorance, are imputed on to the Self.[31] Agreed that it is ignorance that is the cause of this false attribution upon the Self, but the question is: How can even this false attribution occur when the two—the Self and intelligence—run parallel to each other? The parallels have no possibility of even having a false meeting-ground. It is this inexplicable problem that the Sāṃkhya-Yoga has failed to answer. It is similar to the problem of *māyā* in Advaita Vedānta. To avoid the problem, ignorance is postulated for the purpose of solving this problem. Even upon the postulation of ignorance as the cause of this apparent relationship between the two, the problem in no manner is solved. Be as it may, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinks that the psyhosomatic forms of existence will continue to the extent ignorance continues to operate. The continuation of embodied existence means the continuance of suffering. The basic character of ignorance is expressed when the attributes of intelligence erroneously are superimposed

upon the Self, which by nature is attributeless. To say that I am weak, I am thirsty, I am fat or thin, is wrongly to identify the psychosomatic self with the transcendent Self.[32] It is this superimposition of the attributes of the nonself upon the Self that prolongs the continuation of ignorance, and thereby of pain. Due to ignorance, the circuit of phenomenal existence continues its endless cyclical rounds.

All forms of psychosomatic life are the products of ignorance. It is ignorance, through the karmic process, that governs life in the world, nay the world itself. The way to overcome confusion, and thereby the existential pain, is to follow the path of knowledge. Thus the Sāṃkhya-Yoga repeats what the Upaniṣads have been proclaiming: "He who knows the *ātman* crosses over (the ocean of suffering)."[33] In the *Sāṃkhyasūtra*[34] soteriological function of knowledge is well expressed: "Through knowledge liberation; through ignorance, bondage."

The first step on the ladder to liberation is to make use of such a mode of knowledge that would negate the wrong conceptions concerning the Self. In other words, it means that, through the process of negation, we should be able to remove such attributes from the Self that do not pertain to it.[35] It is by employing the method of negation that the removal of erroneous attributes of the Self is actualised, and thereby the true nature of the Self is cognised. What is the true nature of the Self? It is said that the Self is attributeless, that it has no commerce with the non-self.[36] Once the knowledge of the Self is gained, the true character of pain, too, is known. Pain ultimately turns out to be the product of ignorance. This knowledge of the Self informs the aspirant that the experience of pain persists to the extent it is erroneously identified with the Self. Pain is basically a mental or a physical affair. It has nothing to do with the Self. Whatever ethical judgements one may have concerning pain become empty the moment it is known that the Self's relations with intelligence are more apparent than real. What the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is attempting to formulate is that freedom from pain lies in restricting its role to phenomenal occurrences, which means that the transcendent Self in no manner is subject to experiences that are empirically

painful. The moment it is recognised that the Self is inherently free and eternal, untouched by the psychosomatic accretions, that very moment our judgement would have a new perspective, in that suffering would no more be viewed as belonging to the Self. We think of suffering as being constant on account of not knowing the impermanent character of the empirical. It is because of ignorance that we impute permanency upon the changing phenomena of suffering. If suffering were permanent, then there would be no possibility of obtaining freedom from it. Since the possibility of freedom from suffering exists, it means that suffering is neither permanent nor real. When suffering is termed as not being real, it means that it is not real absolutely. Suffering is real to the extent psychosomatic existence lasts. Upon the disembodiment of existence, suffering disappears, which means that it is unreal when looked from the perspective of the Self. However, the experience of suffering will continue to be insofar as man remains under the spell of ignorance.

Before we proceed any further, let us concentrate on the idea as to how man is conceived in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga conceives the human personality as a kind of miniature of the cosmic structure. What it amounts to saying is that that the human personality is structurally composed of the same layers of being of which the hierarchy of Nature is composed. However, man is not merely a conglomeration of various constituents of Matter. The uniqueness of man lies in the fact that he, when seen apart from his materiality, is identical with the Self. It is the Selfhood of man that puts him beyond the processes of Matter.

It is the Self that characterises human nature. The Self, as a transcendent category, is beyond the operations of Nature, which means that the Self is transcendent to Nature. As an inactive and indifferent spectator, the Self in no way involves itself with the mechanical and manifestational process of Nature. It means that the Self is in no manner related to the body-mind complex, which belongs to the realm of Nature. It is an interpretation of man that has its roots in philosophical dualism. It is a dualism that maintains that the Self, on account of its spiritual nature, is different from Matter and its pro-

ducts. As opposites, they are in no manner related to each other. It is this dualism of body and Spirit that has bedevilled human thought from its very inception. As such it has given rise to serious philosophical problems. If it is assumed that the Self is awareness and non-relational, then how is consciousness inserted in the womb of Matter? It is not possible for consciousness to make use of the body for purposes of knowledge on account of them being distinct and different from each other. Since consciousness is awareness, it is logically impossible for it to get embodied in Matter, which is devoid of awareness. The answer that is given to such problems is in terms of hiding the problem under the bush. It is said that the Self causes only its reflection in Nature, viz., in what is called personality. It is this reflection of the Self that is identified with empirical consciousness. It is therefore said that man, being essentially awareness, must, by transcending the ordinary structures of consciousness, re-identify itself with the Self.

The Yoga system aims at eliminating such structures of Nature that are seen as causing impediments on the way of rediscovery of the Self. It is by going beyond the modes of Nature that the essential nature of the Self is rediscovered, and thereby is realised freedom from Nature itself.

The cause of suffering, therefore, is seen in the apparent union of the Self with Nature and its products. Through this assumed union there is given birth to such negative dispositions as, for example, attachment, aversion and thirst for empirical life, and these negative dispositions constitute the causes-of-suffering. It is the eradication of these causes, and thereby of these dispositions, which Yoga aims at. It is by removing the veils of ignorance that the Self is discovered, and thereby is fulfilled the soteric goal of human existence.

The Nature of the Mind

The source of pain is said to be the mind, its operations (*vṛtti*), and the different states of consciousness. The aim of Yoga is to bring to an end, through its ascetical discipline and meditative techniques, the fluctuational operations of the mind.[37] Through introvertive techniques the Yogī is enabled to gain

control over the operations of the mind,[38] and thereby give rise to complete stillness that is seen as a prerequisite for the deepening of contemplative inwardness. As far as the states of the mind are concerned, they are numerous as well as complex. As the states of consciousness are complex, ambiguous and numerous, so the experiences they give rise to are likewise complex, ambiguous and numerous. Broadly speaking, the various experiences that are generated by the different states of consciousness may be classified into two types: pleasant and unpleasant. It is within this typological framework that the various experiences that are given rise by the various states of consciousness may be reduced to the following categories:

1. Experiences that are characterised by mental confusion in which unreal or illusory experiences are construed as being true. The experiences of this category emerge from such states as dream, hallucinations, illusions, etc.
2. Experiences that are of normal character and nature. Such experiences belong to the man who is immersed in the world of daily commerce.
3. Finally, there are experiences that are supersenusous or supernatural. Such experiences are of para-psychological nature, and basically stem from a state of consciousness that result from enstasy (*samādhi*). The character of such experiences, being non-empirical, is said to be transcendent.

Each state of consciousness, according to Patañjali, has its own science that explains its limits, functions and nature. If, for example, we want to have a conceptual clarity of what we think or how we think, we have to have a specific theory of knowledge in terms of which we may proceed to analyse our thoughts. It is the role and function of any theory of knowledge to remove confusion from the mind by bringing in clarity of thought. However, all the normal and psychological ideas or experiences, in the context of yogic thinking, are false, or should we say, relatively real. It is so because whatever empirical experiences we may have, they have their origin in

ignorance. The normal experiences may be real insofar as normalcy is concerned, but, when looked at from an absolute standpoint, they turn out to be false. The only experiences that are real, according to the Yoga system, are those that belong to the transcendent realm, which in religious language would be assumed to be spiritual. The aim of Yoga, therefore, is to eliminate such modes of perception or experience that it considers false or untrue.[39] In doing so, the Yoga system thereby attempts at making available such experiences that are non-empirical and non-conceptual, and in terms of which is served the goal that Yoga has set for itself.[40]

The function of the mind, both at its sub-normal and normal levels, is said to be fivefold, namely, sound and unsound perceptions, imaginary perceptions (like fantasies), sleep and memory.[41] It is not only the false perceptions that have to be eliminated or overcome, but equally the sound ones also.[42] This is so because every kind of operation of the mind, whether sound or unsound, is the cause of disturbance. Any particular operation of the mind may be linked to the pebble that is thrown in the still waters of a lake. As soon as the small pebble touches the water, there emerge countless ripples or waves upon the surface of the water, thereby destroying the placid stillness that prevailed prior to the emergence of ripples. Similar is the case with the mind. The perceptions of both varieties, sound and unsound, are like the pebbles that give rise to numerous waves in the mind, thereby causing mental disturbance of one kind or the other. Once these waves are allowed to emerge, they thereby give rise to various kinds of dispositions, and one of them is the thirst for life.[43] Repeating the slogan of Buddha, the text of the *Yogasūtra* maintains that it is the desire for life (*abhiniveśa*) that is responsible, nay the root-cause, for every kind of painful experience. The desire for life will disappear only when the dispositional ripples are not allowed to emerge in the mind, which signifies that no external stimuli of any type would have the power of giving rise to any kind of operation in the mind. In other words, it is by making mind non-functional that stillness and peace is restored, and thereby presence of pain is turned into an absence. The very absence of painful experiences means that freedom

has been gained from such structures that cause, through the medium of the mind, the emergence of such dispositions as, for example, of aversion, attachment, etc. The non-functionality of the mind does not mean that desires are completely eliminated. It means the reduction of desires to their minimal state. Accordingly we are told that "the desires, when they are in a feeble state, cannot be destroyed by any effort. When the mind is dissolved, they vanish with it."[44]

What force or agency is it that is responsible in giving rise to the numerous dispositions (*vṛtti*) in the mind? The answer to this question can, broadly speaking, be given from two perspectives. The first perspective would say that it is the contact of the mind via the senses with the sense-objects that is responsible in giving rise to the dispositions in the mind. Initially the contact is in terms of pure sensation, which, upon its solidification, is transferred in the form of an image of the object to the mind. It is the image of the object that, in the form of cognitive knowledge, leaves its impression upon the mind. Thus the cognitive impression serves as a kind of stimulant for the arising of disposition in the mind. Insofar as the quality of the disposition is concerned, it is dependent upon the quality of the cognitive impression of the object. If the object is beautiful, the impression will also be of the same quality, which means that the nature of the disposition, too, would be identical. It is upon the arising of the disposition that there arises desire for the possession or non-possession of the object. If the object is pleasant, there arises the disposition that desires its possession. If the object is ugly, the desire would be for its non-possession. However, both forms of desire ultimately terminate in the experience of pain. The second source for the arising of dispositions in the mind is located in the latent impressions that are stored in the subconscious mind. These impressions are either inherited from our past lives or from the experiences that we have in the present. These latent impressions, when activated, give rise to dispositions of various kinds. Whatever be the source of dispositions, the fact remains that they create disturbance in the mind, and this disturbance becomes the cause of much pain and anxiety. It is for this reason that the system of Yoga

has devised a specific kind of discipline for the purpose of subduing these dispositions. It is upon the suppression of dispositions that the primal calm is restored to the mind, and thereby freedom from painful experiences is realised.

These various dispositions have been classified into five types. This classification is based upon the view that thinks that the psychosomatic life of an individual is constituted by five factors, which are ignorance (*avidyā*), envy (*dveṣa*), sense of individuality (*asmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), and desire for life (*abhiniveśa*).[45] These psychic currents or dispositions have not to be treated as being separate from each other, which means that they function collectively. In other words, they constitute the totality of the flow of psychosomatic life. All these dispositions, collectively and individually, terminate in experiences that are very painful. It is the aim of the methods of Yoga to overcome the negative fallout of these dispositions by suppressing them in their entirety.[46] Through the suppression, nay elimination, of the dispositions is reached a state of complete rest or stillness that is comparable to the stillness of the sea.[47] A mind that is unperturbed and calm does not give in to any such experience that is either psychic or sense-based.[48]

The aim of Yoga, therefore, is to eliminate the dispositional functions of the mind. However, the operations of the mind cannot be eliminated merely with the help of metaphysical knowledge. Even upon knowing the essential difference between right and wrong an individual goes on committing deeds that are unethical. Thus mere knowing is not a sufficient guarantee for putting mind on to the right track. While accepting the importance of theoretical knowledge, the Yoga system, however, lays much stress upon practice than upon feeding the intellect with conceptual information. The mind not only functions intentionally, but also is a reservoir of innumerable impressions (*saṃskāra*) and drives (*vāsanā*). These impressions as well as drives feed the mind by activating the operations, and thereby allow the psychosomatic flow to continue. Life, thus, is seen as a continuous discharge of latent impressions. The latent impressions or drives discharge themselves through the acts of consciousness. What it amounts

to saying is that that the psychosomatic life is nothing but the actualisation of the subconscious impressions and drives. By actualising themselves through the operations of the mind, the impressions and drives condition life in space-time. However, the conditioning of life takes place in accordance with the law of karman, in that whatever impressions there are in the subconscious, have been inherited from the lives gone by. The impressions, through the operation of karman, determine the present mode of existence. It is at this point that the yogic methods of meditation and of discipline are employed. It is believed that the flow of impressions can be dried up through the ascetical methods of Yoga.

The drying of both active and latent impressions, through the ascetical and introversive methods of Yoga, deactivate the mind, and thereby is achieved the cessation of the operations of the mind. The deactivation of the mind also means the relationship of the Self with Nature, which is of the nature of reflection (*bimba*), is completely snapped. Consequently the Self abides in its own-being, viz., it abides in the state of total isolation. In phenomenological terms it means that consciousness is enabled to return unto itself by dissociating itself from the processes of life. This dissociation achieves its result only when the yogic techniques are mystically empowered, through the process of initiation, by the one who has reached the supreme goal of liberation. The one who has the power of energising the yogic techniques is called *guru*, or the one who removes spiritual darkness.[49] It is *guru* who, through mystical initiation,[50] has the power of sanctifying yogic techniques. Apart from initiation, what is needed of an adept is complets dispassion (*vairāgya*) and constant practice (*abhyāsa*) of the techniques that have been imparted at the time of initiation.[51] Dispassion and the constant practice of yogic techniques have the power of burning the impurities that, in the form of impressions, cause trouble in the mind. Upon the burning of mental and psychic impurities there occurs the birth of faith (*śraddhā*).[52] It is, therefore, initiation, dispassion, constant practices of yogic methods and faith that collectively empower the adept of gaining access to

the soteric goal of liberation, which in yogic terminology means of entering into the indeterminate enstatic state (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*). It is believed that the Self completely frees itself from its association with Nature when the adept gains access to the indeterminate enstatic state.

The goal of Yoga will remain unrealisable if the techniques are not followed with dedication. The importance of practice is described in one of the Haṭhayogic texts thus:

> Through practice (*abhyāsa*) success is obtained, through practice one gains liberation. Perfect consciousness is gained through practice. Yoga is attained through practice. . . . Through practice one gains the power of prophecy (*vāc*), and the power of going anywhere,[53] through mere exertion of will.[54]

The yogic exercises are so perfectly tuned as would lead to the attainment of the state of indifference and dispassion. An inactive mind is identified with stillness or, should we say, with spiritual tranquillity.[55] A dispassionate mind is "above all free from material desires."[56] When the mind has achieved the state of dispassion, then the "analysis is carried to a point where the Self is seen as distinct from all else; and absolutely no desire ever arises for anything or for any form of matter."[57] It is this goal that Yoga has set for itself.

The Nature of Liberation

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga, as already pointed out, conceives that the Self is pure, unattached, indifferent, inactive, eternal and completely autonomous. The Self, while being unattached and relationless, is not related to anything outside itself except to itself.[58] A man of ordinary intelligence thinks that the Self is in bondage, and therefore needs to be freed from the chains that bind it to the peg of bondage. The belief that the Self is in bondage is grounded in ignorance, and this ignorance expresses itself through empirical modes of understanding and knowledge. What is thought to be a bound Self or Self-in-bondage is, in fact, eternally free. Since Self has never been in bondage, it means that the exertion that is directed towards liberation of the bound Self should be considered nothing more than a mere drama. While this drama of liberating the Self

from bondage goes on, the Self remains always a spectator (*sākṣin*) of the drama that is being played on the stage of Nature. Liberation, from the standpoint of the Self, is nothing more than to gain insight into the essential nature of the Self. The so-called empirical ego or self, which considers the Self as being in bondage, is itself the product of Nature, and therefore belongs to the category of ignorance. The psychosomatic ego (*asmitā*) vanishes the moment spiritual awakening occurs once consciousness, through introversion, is led to abide in its own-being. It is the inner awakening of the spirit that destroys the relative reality of the psychological prop called "I." It is upon knowing the relativity of the ego that the phenomenal existence is understood as being a chain of painful experiences while the Self impassively witnesses the drama. It is in the death of the self that the Self is recovered. The entire scheme of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga concerning the Self is very paradoxical. The Self, although eternally free, pure and passive, somehow gets associated, through the agency of intelligence, with Nature and its modes. The association (*saṃyoga*) may be an apparent one, but for an ordinary man or for the man of low intelligence this association is real and actual. In order to rupture the link of this apparent relationship between the two, the Self is in need of support from that entity, namely, Matter, with which it wants to have no association.

The Self can actualise the possibility of knowledge through the medium of intelligence, which itself is the product of Matter. It is through intelligence alone that the Self knows its own essential nature. This knowing of itself shows the dependence of the Self upon Matter. If it is *a priori* assumed that the Self is inherently free and the so-called bondage is only apparent, then the very exertion for soteric freedom would be a sheer wastage of energy and of time. And, moreover, suffering as such, too, turns out to be illusory. If suffering is illusory, a mere concoction of heightened imagination, then why should one at all endeavour for its elimination? The response of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga to such pertinent questions is in terms of the assertion that no comparison should be made between the transcendent and the empirical, as both of them belong to two different realms. The Self, which is a transcendent

category, cannot be evaluated in terms of such logical reasoning that is purely empirical. Empirical methods of evaluation or of judgement are applicable to what pertains to the phenomenal.

For the Sāṃkhya-Yoga the Self is not an all-pervading Spirit. It believes in the plurality of selves. There are as many selves as there are existents. Each Self is like a monad of Leibnitz. Each Self lives its own autonomous and isolated existence. The Self, abiding in its own-being in isolation, has no association either with Matter or with other selves. The world of Matter, as it were, is constituted by the eternally free and isolated self-monads. This Sāṃkhyan understanding of the Self as being isolated means that the Self not only is denied any kind of relationship with the world or with other selves, but even communion with other free selves is refused to it. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga seems to have postulated the plurality of selves because of a practical concern. If there was only one and non-dual Self, then entire humankind would gain soteric liberation the moment the Self realised freedom.[59]

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga thinks of soteric freedom in terms of liberation from pain. And freedom from pain is realised the moment it is known that the Self, on account of ignorance, has been obscured. It is the obscuration of the Self that is responsible in giving rise to painful experiences. Once the veil of obscuration is removed, through yogic methods of enstasy, from the Self, there dawns the understanding that understands that the Self is free from pain. Pain, rather, is exterior to the Self, viz, it is a product of Nature, and as such is a drama played by the ego. The personality-complex (*asmitā*), however, does not cease to be upon knowing the essential nature of the Self, which also means the attainment of soteric liberation. The liberated one continues to act to the extent he leads an embodied existence. While living in the world, he exhausts all the accumulated (*saṃcita*) impressions (*saṃskarā*) and drives (*vāsanā*) of previous lives and of the present life that have been accumulated prior to the gaining of liberation. However, the liberated person, while exhausting the accumulated fruits of past deeds, remains dispassionate, which means that whatever deeds he performs do not bear their corresponding fruit. He acts no more with the consciousness that "I am

acting," "I am working." Rather his actions are in terms of "it acts." As he is no more under the influence of ignorance, he completely remains free from the karmic nuclei. When the karmic seeds have been exhausted in terms of "it acts," liberation is total.[60]

The Sāṃkhya-Yoga accepts the reality of pain insofar as one continues to live under the spell of ignorance. Pain, however, is denied its due upon the attainment of the state of liberation. It is like saying that I was never thirsty upon quenching the thirst. Such an interpretation of pain seems to be unfair. If this line of thought is followed to its logical end, it would mean that every effort turns out to be a completele waste upon realising that the Self was never in pain or in bondage. If suffering, and thereby bondage, is considered to be apparent, then it is meaningless to speak about either of them. Suffering is rejected as being suffering by ignoring it as suffering.[61]

The Methods of Enstasy

The real point of departure for yogic praxis is centered on what is called the introversive methods of meditation. The goal of yogic methods is to enable the Yogī to arrive at the unconditioned state of existence, a state that is completely free from the empirical limitations and accretions. It is a state that is reverse to what the conditioned existence, within the continuum of space-time, signifies. It is this existential concern for a different mode of existence that is constitutive of what we call yogic ideology. It is through the process of self-integration that the Yoga wants to realise this transcendent goal of absolute freedom. This existential concern is beautifully expressed in the *Yogakuṇḍalinī Upaniṣad* (3. 12-15) thus:

> As the flame, dormant in the wood, cannot flare up without friction, so also the torch of gnosis (cannot shine) without the Yoga of the practice (of integration).

The process of self-integration, according to the system of Yoga, begins at that point of departure where the process of withdrawal, of abandonment, of renunciation, and of inward-

ness begins. The first step on the path to introversion, of going inward, of cutting asunder relationship with the world, is structured on the model of Reality that Yoga has postulated. As Reality in itself is viewed to be transcendent or non-temporal, it means that it is completely free from the dualism of opposites that is constitutive of empirical reality. If Reality in its absoluteness is devoid of conceptual or existential dualism, it signifies that the individual, too, will have to cleanse himself from the imprints or impurities of dualism. Dualism, whatever its form or expression may be, denotes disharmony. On account of dissimilarity the opposites cannot co-exist, which denotes conflict and strife. Wherever and whenever there is conflict, there is suffering. Peace or transcendence of conflict is possible only when there is harmony, and harmony becomes a realisable goal through self-integration. And Yoga believes that self-integration is an achievable goal if consciousness is saved from diffusion by turning it inwards. Insofar as consciousness runs after the external objects, it will continue to be in the state of diffusion. Thus for a Yogī the beginning of self-integration is made at that point of practice when consciousness abides in the state of peaceful harmony. The practice for inner harmony begins when the Yogī makes an inward visualisation of Reality in terms of its unity, which means of conceiving Being as a single unity. Upon visualising the unity of Being as a fact of experience, the Yogī thereby looks at himself as an undivided Being. In this way the Yogī frees himself from the unbridled desires and instincts that are constitutive of psychosomatic life. Thus is born dispassion through the practice of the yogic methods of enstasy. Courageous, indeed, is the Yogī who succeeds in the path, for:

> The path of the wise Brāhmaṇas is hard (to follow). No one treat it easily, O Bharatṣarbha! (It is) like a terrible jungle creeping with great serpents, (filled) with (numberless) pits, devoid of water, full of thorns and (hence) inaccessible (to all but the strongest).[62]

The process of introversive concentration (*ekāgrata*), or should we say of inner integration, is initiated or begun with

the intention of restricting the operations of the senses, and thereby also of the mind. Fixing the attention of consciousness on a single point or object regulates both the mind and the senses by not allowing them to operate in a fashion that is anarchical. Once attention and the object of attention, upon the intensification and deepening of concentration, merge into each other, there consequently occurs withdrawal of the senses from their corresponding objects, which at the same time means there is lessened the input that mind receives through the senses. In this manner is restricted, in a graduated manner, the field of operations of the mind and of the senses. There arrives a time when consciousness is so immersed in itself that it has hardly any awareness of what is taking place outside or even within. It is this kind of state that the Yogī desires to achieve, because such a state terminates in the cessation of normal functioning of the mind and of the senses.

The structure of introversive methods of concentration consist of the following limbs (*aṅga*), namely, bodily postures (*āsana*), rhythmic breathing (*prāṇāyāma*), and the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects (*pratyāhāra*). All these yogic limbs are as aids for bringing the operations of mind under control. A mind that is not under control is compared to a wild horse. It is through these methods or limbs that the violent temper of the horse, which is the mind, is so tamed as would no more be danger to the rider, which in our case is the individual being. To bring mind under control or to one-pointed concentration the practitioner is expected to concentrate or focus his attention, in calm solitude, on a picture, on the tip of the nose, on the space between the eyebrows, on God, and so on. As to how to engage in the practice of concentration is beautifully explained, while describing the process of breath-control, in the *Bhagavadgītā* thus:

> Shutting out (all) external contact and (fixing) the sight between the eyebrows, making even the inflow and outflow (of the vital force) moving within the nostrils (in the form of breath), (the Yogī approaches emancipation).[63]

The scheme that is envisaged in the *Bhagavadgītā* concerning

concentrative contemplation is based upon the renunciatory spirituality of abandonment or withdrawal. The withdrawal from the world, in terms of renunciation, has to be so interiorised as would result in the complete abandonment of bodily existence. This is achieved by shutting the senses to what is called the external contact. Once the link with the outside world is ruptured, there, through deep concentration on a fixed point, emerges such a state of consciousness that is contentless and abstract. The emergence of such a state of consciousness is hastened by regulating the breath. It is the practice of these three methods that constitutes the initial stage of meditation.

It is now quite clear that the purpose of meditative concentration, first and foremost, is to train and tame the violent or agitative dispositions of the mind. The training and taming of the senses as well as the whirls of the mind is done by holding them together, viz., not allowing them to remain diffused or scattered. The non-diffusion of the senses and of the whirls is necessary because they dominate and determine all the three states of consciousness, which are those of waking, dream and deep sleep. It is the concentration of depth that stabilises the mind by not allowing external or internal forces to intrude into its chambers. The normal mind is always in the state of diffusion, running after this idea or that, allowing every kind of disposition to arise. The mind, in the state of diffusion, has no possibility of being with itself, of knowing itself, which means that in such a state it is never centered on itself. The dispositions, active or latent, as well as the sense stimuli compell the mind not to be itself by scattering its attention in all the directions. It is such a state of mind that suffers from delusion—and the knowledge that is acquired through such a state is also delusory. It is to transcend this delusory and diffusive state of the mind that Yoga makes use of the method of concentration along with other methods.

It is believed that the diffusive state of the mind is overcome when the field of the operations of the mind is reduced, step by step, by making attention on the object of concentration effective. The field of the operations is so restricted whereby the mind and the object of concentration penetrate and merge

into each other. What the Yogī wants is mastery over his mind, which means that he desires to reflect rather than be reflected upon. To the extent concentration deepens or becomes abstract, to that extent is the field of activities of the mind reduced. With the intensification of concentration, the mind is deactivated. In other words, the mind is deactivated to the measure concentration is deepened. Upon the deactivation of the mind begins the process of drying up of the impressions that are stored in the subconscious. The drying up of impressions means that the mind is not subjected to troublesome or agitative whirls. Concentration, in its external aspect, subdues the senses by disabling them from forming contact with the outside world.[64] Disabling of the senses means that the mind receives no more sensations of the senses. Once the mind and the senses are, as it were, arrested, there is opened up the passage for consciousness to return to itself, which at the same time signifies that consciousness is saved from diffusion. The drying up of the dispositional impressions result in effecting discontinuity between the inside and the outside, between the mind and the senses. The insertion of discontinuity within the empirical mode of consciousness also means the uprooting of its intentionality. In other words, consciousness, by turning upon itself, no more goes out intentionally and accordingly withdraws from the field that is exterior to it. Concentration, first and foremost, is a method that subdues the dispositional activities of the mind by deactivating the senses and by drying up the subliminal impressions in the subconscious. The taming of the mind is necessary because the mind not only is the centre of impressions, but also is the source of thought.[65] Also it is through the practice of concentration that will power is generated, and through it the Yogī is able to bring the acts of empirical consciousness to a point of standstill. The Yogī, through the operations of will, is enabled to intervene in the flow of empirical consciousness, and thereby is able to direct it in accordance with his requirements.[66]

The attainment of perfection in contemplative concentration is not possible unless certain ethical and technical requirements are fulfilled. As to what these ethical or technical requirements are have been explained in the text of the *Yogasūtra* as a kind

of ascension on the ladder of Yoga. It is upon fulfilling these requirements that a proper course of yogic meditation cannot only be learnt, but also interiorised. The steps or conditions are physiological, psychological and ethical in nature. All these steps technically are called "limbs" (*aṅga*). The limbs, eight in number,[67] may broadly be divided into three groups, namely, ethical, physiological and mental. The ethical and the physiological limbs of Yoga are collectively called the outer or external members (*bahir-aṅga*), whereas the steps that are mental in nature are spoken of as the inner members (*antar-aṅga*).

The first two limbs are ethical in nature, whereas the next three limbs are physiological in intent and form. The last three members, properly speaking, constitute what may properly be called the contemplative concentration of Yoga. When taken together, all the limbs reflect the ascetical temper of yogic ideology. In terms of ascetical praxis, these members create such an atmosphere that they prove quite helpful to the practitioner in sharpening the process of concentration. It is because of this reason that all the psychological members have been put within the frame of concentration. As the last three members are completely of mental in nature, so they constitute the heart of yogic meditation. It is by making effective use of these members, in a graduated manner, that the ladder of Yoga is ascended, which ultimately results in the experience of such an enstatic state that is indeterminate and contentless.

There are some post-Patañjali yogic manuals that have, instead of eight, postulated only six members as constituting the ladder of contemplative practice. The six-member (*ṣaḍ-aṅga*) yogic praxis, for example, is well catalogued in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*.[68] In the six-member Yoga the first two members, which are ethical in nature, have not been included. The non-inclusion of these two limbs may be due to the fact that it is expected that the practitioner of Yoga must have already, prior to taking to the yogic practice, gained proficiency in the cultivation of ethical virtues. The text of the *Yogasūtra* has given the following formulation of the eight limbs of Yoga:

1. *yama*—self-restraint
2. *niyama*—self-discipline
3. *āsana*—posture
4. *prāṇāyāma*—breath-control
5. *pratyāhāra*—withdrawal of the senses
6. *dhāraṇā*—concentration
7. *dhyāna*—meditation
8. *samādhi*—enstasy

These limbs of Yoga have not been treated as stages, viz., one learding to other. They have, rather, been treated as units or blocks. It is in terms of blocks that the mystical ladder is ascended terminating ultimately in the attainment of contentless state of consciousness. The first block consists of the first two limbs, which are *yama* and *niyama*. It is upon gaining proficiency in the cultivation of ethical virtues that the Yogī steps into next block, which consists of the three limbs of *āsana, prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhāra*. The function of these three limbs is to effect complete withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects. Once withdrawal of the senses has been perfected the Yogī then is prepared to enter into proper yogic concentration, which is the last and final block and consists of the limbs of *dhāraṇā, dhyāna* and *samādhi*. It also needs to be kept in mind that *yama* as an ethical discipline prepares the senses for effecting rupture with their respective objects. *Niyama* and *dhāraṇā* go together, in that concentration is sharpened once the Yogī succeeds in achieving complete self-discipline in terms of the body and mind. *Āsana* connotes the essential aspect of meditation (*dhyāna*). *Prāṇāyāma* is the counterpart of *samādhi*, in that it is by mastering the art of breathing that both the internal (*antar*) and external (*bahir*) integration are realised.

The Ethical Discipline

Yama: The first yogic limb—*yama* or self-restraint—visualises the practical theme of Yoga as basically consisting of such practices that are ascetical in nature and orientation. It is assumed that an individual existent is like a wild horse if left to itself, or if not brought into the framework of mental and

physical discipline. It is by imposing discipline that the streak of anarchy within the individual is overcome. Discipline of any kind has to be ascetical, in that one is asked voluntarily to deprive oneself of experiences or things that one would like to have, but which in the long run could prove to be disastrous. To restrain the senses or emotions means to deprive them of the food that they want to have. The very foundation of Yoga, thus, has its roots in such an ascetical ideology that thinks that the attainment of a far better state of existence is possible provided the present mode of existence is transcended through the ascetically-oriented methods of privations. It is within this broad conceptual framework that the yogic ethical self-restraint has to be evaluated.

As the restraint has an ethical orientation, it would be quite wrong to assume that Yoga, as a soteric system of salvation, has not concerned itself with values that enhance social responsibility. Such an assumption is completely erroneous, in that Yoga desires that an individual has no possibility of realising his spiritual nature unless he roots his life in the cultivation of such ethical norms that are beneficial both to himself and to society. It is so because no society can function properly unless it is permeated by such ethical principles that make the societal agencies human and functional. It is the collectivity of the individuals that are constitutive of what we call society. If human beings, collectively and individually, are ethical, then society would also exude the spirit of humanness.

The *yamas* in themselves are not specifically yogic. As ethics is the foundation of a properly led human existence, so we can say that the restraints are applicable to every human being in every condition. They are, thus, the preliminary steps in the life of the one who, before anything else, desires to be a good human being, which, when considered from a religious perspective, means that a religious person is expected to be a good human being. It is through the cultivation of ethical virtues that goodness within an individual takes a concrete form. Even a non-religious person, without any compunction, can consider them to be conducive for the betterment of life. All religions, no matter what their dogmatic assumptions may be, prescribe certain ethical norms that a believer is expected

to cultivate. The Yoga system, keeping this general framework in view, has formulated certain rules concerning the conduct of life. As ethical norms, the *yamas,* within the broader yogic framework, can be considered as methods of asceticism. The aim of the restraints is to wash the screen of the mind from such negative or improper stains that cause hindrance in spiritual life. Every act, whether good or bad, has an immediate consequence. To overcome impediments in the way of spiritual progression, the Yoga system has prescribed the cultivation of certain ethical principles as a necessary antidote against the disease of anarchy of the mind and of the senses.

The mind, if left to its anarchical doings, may become easily the prey of misconceived thoughts, cognitions and sensations. Not to allow the mind to become prey of such misconceived tendencies, what is needed is a discipline that curbs the mind from committing the acts of desperation. It is for this reason that the system of Yoga has enunciated a certain kind of ethical discipline.[69] The misconceived thoughts that mind may conceive express themselves through such attitudes as, for example, "I shall hurt him who hurts me," or "I shall attack him who attacks me," and so on. It is this kind of negative tendency that the Yoga wants to help the adept to overcome by giving him the prescription of such ethical rules that lead to the elimination of negativity. A real practitioner of Yoga, thus, is considered to be the one who does not allow his mind to be crowded with such antagonistic thoughts that lead to conflict, and thereby to painful experiences. To avoid such pitfalls it is necessary, according to the system of Yoga, to submit willingly to such an ethical discipline that terminates in the arising of experiences that are positive as well as devoid of traces of negativity. It is the function and aim of the first limb—*yama*—to prepare the individual for such a positive eventuality.

The *yama,* which is derived from the root *yam* (to hold up), delineates that disposition of the Yogī that does not allow, on the mental and physical planes, the emergence of antagonistic behaviour or of thoughts to occur. The yogic limb of self-restraint consists of five interrelated constituents,[70] and they are:

1. *ahiṃsā*[71]—non-injury
2. *satya*—truthfulness
3. *asteya*—non-stealing
4. *brahmacarya*—chastity
5. *aparigraha*—non-greediness

All the five aspects of self-restraint have been given the appellation of being "great vows" (*mahā-vrata*).[72] It is from this very nomenclature that one can recognise the importance that the sytem of Yoga accords to the ethical discipline of self-restraint. Ethical discipline is seen as the foundation upon which the spiritual edifice of soteric liberation is built. If the foundation is weak, the structure that is built upon a weak foundation is bound to collapse. The discipline of self-restraint has been so formulated by the author of the *Yogasūtra* as would result in the construction of a foundation that is strong and has the capacity of absorbing every kind of shock without causing any kind of crack. The five constituents of self-restraint, thus, have to be viewed as providing the necessary wherewithal for a strong spiritual foundation. As great vows, a Yogī is asked to practise them with diligence and in all climes and conditions.[73] The main function of the five constituents of self-restraint is to enable the Yogī to gain control over the whirls of mind, which, at the practical level of life, means of being such a master of oneself that neither the sexual instinct nor the sense of I-ness is allowed to raise its head. They who give a free run to their instinctual urges or physical appetites suffer infinitely from spiritual, mental and physical entropy or dissipation, because each mental or physical urge terminates in the experience that is unpleasant and painful. It is through the cultivation of the five constituents of self-restraint that one attains to the purity of mind and body. The one who is chaste in mind and body does not give in either to the appetites of the flesh or to the unwholesome dispositions of the mind. Whithout the observance and cultivation of the norms of self-restraint there is no possibility of leading a life that is rooted in the experience of the unity of Being. Instead such a life will experience disintegration both at the individual and cosmic levels. The great and most important virtue among all the

virtues of self-restraint is that of non-injury, and it is for this reason that it heads the list. This is what Tiruvalluvar has to say concerning the virtue of non-injury: "The greatest virtue is that of non-injury; every evil comes to them who hurt others deliberately."[74]

The precept of non-injury need not be taken simply as a negative virtue. It is a comprehensive term. It means never to hurt anyone in thought, word and deed. It is a virtue that concretely explains the sentiment of kindness—and the cultivation of kindness frees the Yogī from thoughts that are malignant. It is through the cultivation of kindness that our human nature is actualised. A person who cultivates this virtue frees himself from the snare of enmity.[75]

Insofar as the virtue of truthfulness is concerned, it has always been held in high esteem. Reality itself is indentified with truth, because truth is the symbol of the unchangeable—and the unchangeable is the Absolute alone. As truth is equated to Being, so they who are truthful realise the state of prophecy (*vāc*), in that whatever they say, comes to be.[76] It is, therefore, asserted, and rightly so, that the cosmic order (*ṛta*) is maintained by truthfulness. Truth as Being preserves cosmic order because it is indivisible and unchangeable in itself. The *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*[77] has given expression to this assertion of truth thus:

> No virtue is more excellent than truthfulness, no sin greater than untruth. Therefore the man (of virtue) should seek refuge in truthfulness with all his heart. Without truthfulness worship is of no use; without truthfulness the repeating of holy mantras benefit not; without truthfulness ascetical practices bear no fruit in the same manner as seed on a barren land. Truthfulness is the essence of the supreme *brahman*. It is truthfulness that may be said to be the best form of asceticism. Whatever deed one does must be rooted in truthfulness. There is nothing more excellent than truthfulness.

The third constituent of self-restraint is non-stealing (*asteya*). The purpose of this virtue is to allow the emergence of such a disposition in the individual that eliminates the sense of want or lack. It is the sense of lack of a particular object that drives an individual on the path of having it by hook or crook. If the

possession of the object that is desired, or whose lack hurts the mind, cannot be obtained through proper channel, so the method of stealing is made use of. It is through stealing that the possession of someone else's is taken possession of. In this manner is given rise to various other desires, because the mind of a discontented person always suffers from the sense of lacks. As a consequence of unlimited wants there arises conflict and discontentment in the mind, which ultimately terminates in nihilistic despair. The virtue of non-stealing informs us that as and when there arises in the mind a desire for something, we must immediately curb it. If not curbed in time, it will lead to such acts of desperation that breed discontentment. If the virtue of non-stealing is cultivated, there will subsequently arise a state of satisfaction. An individual with a sense of fulfilment is endowed with a vison by the help of which he understands the *raison d'être* of his former lives.[78] The cultivation of the virtue of non-stealing results in the acquirement of non-greediness (*aparigraha*). Thus both non-stealing and non-greediness are genetically related to each other in the sense of one leading to the emergence of the other.

Insofar as the virtue of chastity (*brahmacarya*) is concerned, it is such a virtue the cultivation of which enables one "to move in *brahman*." It is an ideal that visualises a scheme of practice in terms of which all the instinctual appetites of the flesh are overcome. The significance of this virtue in the life of a Yogī is explained in the *Darśana Upaniṣad*[79] thus:

> Perfect abstention from women, with body, speech and mind, with the exception of one's own wife in the prescribed manner—this is called chastity. The orientation of the mind towards the knowledge of *brahman* is *brahmacarya*, O Paraṃtapa!

They who observe strictly the virtue of chastity attain the supreme goal of salvation in terms of freedom from the lacks of embodied existence. The text of the *Yogasūtra*[80] defines chastity as a process whereby one is grounded in chaste conduct. It is the inner and the outer purity that terminates in the attainment of the supreme goal of salvation.

Niyama: The cultivation of self-discipline (*niyama*) cannot

be performed apart from the cultivation of self-restraint. It is the cultivation of self-restraint that lays the necessary foundation for the practice of the principles that are encapsulated in self-discipline. As the practice of self-restraint has a psychological orientation, so the principles of self-discipline are physical in nature, viz., in the case of the former there is involved much mental exertion than in the case of the latter. This does not mean that the latter is not concerned with the mental processes of the mind. The difference, if any, between the *yama* and *niyama* consists in the following: the former, being ethical in nature, has social bearing, whereas the latter is completely oriented towards the personal spiritual hygiene of the individual. The self-discipline, like the self-restraint, consists of five constituents or principles,[81] and they are:

1. *śauca*—cleanliness (both internal and external)
2. *saṃtoṣa*—contentment
3. *tapas*—austerity
4. *svādhyāya*—study of sacred scriptures
5. *īśvara-praṇidhāna*—worship of God

The principles that are constitutive of self-discipline are not specifically yogic in orientation. They indicate the general ethos of the principles, which means that their cultivation is as necessary for the enhancement of spirituality as is food for the sustenance of life. There is no possibility at all of being spiritual unless the principles of self-discipline are so inserted in the make up of an individual that the illuminative glow of peace is reflected in word, deed and thought. As a means of self-discipline, they prepare the soil in such a manner for the praxis of Yoga that the seed, when sown in it, fructifies itself in the attainment of the supreme goal of salvation. If the soil has been prepared, it becomes much easier and exertionless to gain mastery over the senses and the mind through the application of the physical and mental methods of Yoga. The cultivation of the practice of self-restraint and of self-discipline, initially, is not an easy task. The practice of the self-restraint and of self-discipline has to be so oriented as would allow the emergence of such a conducive atmosphere that makes it

possible, in the long run, to overcome the hurdles that the mind and senses create. Thus the practitionar is given the advice to tackle the mysterious operations of the mind thus: "When opposing thoughts obstruct, dwell on their opposite side."[82] It is a method that an adversary adopts for defeating machinations of the enemy. At the practical level of practice it means that if, for example, there arises the thought of hurting someone, immediately negate this thought by giving rise to the thought of wellbeing. It is, thus, the adversarial method that is seen as the most effective means of making the practice of self-restraint and of self-discipline easeful and efficacious.

To overcome the external as well as the internal obstacles, it is necessary for the Yogī to achieve mental and physical purity. An impure mind will give rise to impure thoughts. Similarly an impure body cannot at all be congenial towards a life that is spiritual. As the inner purity is dependent upon the outer purity, so the purity of both is a pre-requiste for engaging in the practice of Yoga. To be pure basically means to be as transparent as a crystal. The bodily purity does not simply mean the external purity. It basically means the overcoming of the instinctual appetites of the flesh. The mastery over the body is attained by curbing the tendency of the senses of relating themselves to their respective objects. This mastery ultimately results in the attainment of the state of contentment in terms of which bodily and mental lacks are transcended. Consequently émerges the sense of indifference towards the things of the world as well as towards the instinctual appetites of the body. The mastery over the body and over the senses may at the same time be seen as the actualisation of the process of dissociation.[83] It is through dissociation that purity of mind and body is realised, because neither the body nor the senses are in a position to feed themselves with the fluids of sensation. Accordingly the Yogī, on account of mental and bodily purity, regains the placidity of the mind and consequently unperturbed concentration emerges. To the measure concentration is deepened, to that measure is dried up the latent and active impressions in the mind as well as is affected withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects. In this manner is arrested the psychobiological flow of life—and it is what a

Yogī desires to achieve. The gate of knowledge to the Self is opened up the moment the flow of the senses as well as of the mind is arrested.[84]

The very first constitutive principle of self-discipline—purity (*śauca*)—visualises the spiritual scheme that a Yogī is expected to cultivate. It is a principle that tells that it is in transcending the profane structure of existence, or of what we may call impure creation (*aśuddhādhva*), in which lies the real good of man. The embodied existence, while having inserted itself in the middle of the womb of phenomenal profanity, will be subject to unpleasant experiences insofar as it associates itself with Nature or with its products. It is through the instrumentality of the body and mind that the individual existent forms association with every profane structure. The only way of distancing from the profane is by making the instrument of association, which is the mind-body, non-functional. What it means is this: An individual aspirant is asked to arrest the mind-body flow in such a manner as would not be possible for the individual to give rise to any form of association. In order to achieve this goal, Yoga makes use of a psychological technique. The psychological technique is derived from the analysis of the body. Upon analysing the ultimate end of the body, there arises in the mind of the aspirant disgust (*jugupsā*) for the body and for bodily experiences. The more disgust there is for the mind-body complex, the more there develops distance between the individual and the mind-body, which means dissociation from profane Nature. It is this distance or dissociation that terminates in the actualisation of purity. It is through the vision of purity that the aspirant realises the primal impurity of the products, including the mind-body, of Nature. It is in such a frame of mind that the would-be Yogī attempts at purging himself from such moral defects that hinder spiritual growth. It is through the practice of enhanced purity that the aspirant develops a special kind of sensitivity towards the profane and the unwholesome. The purity of mind-body results in the emergence of the purity of thought, word and deed.[85] It is through heightened purity that the aspirant attains to the state of lucidity of being (*sattva-śuddhi*).[86] The aspirant comes to know the own-being of the Self when

he experiences the self-abiding of the Self.[87] The various levels of purification have been spoken of in the *Manusmṛti*[88] thus:

> The body is cleansed with water, the mind is cleansed with truthfulness, the innate essence (*bhūta-ātman*) is purified by wisdom and austerities, and the intellect (*buddhi*) is purified (by transcendental) knowledge.

Śaṃkara speaks about the higher methods that a Yogī employs for bringing about inner and outer purity in these words:

> The *jīva*, free from impurities, being well heated in the fire of knowledge kindled by listening (to the sacred scriptures) and by other means, shines of himself like gold.[89]

It is through the practice of purity that real freedom from the shackles of "I" and "mine" is obtained. Free from the bondage of I-ness, the aspirant, on the one hand, gains complete freedom from such dispositions as attachment, envy and delusion and, on the other hand, has no desire to dominate the other. Devoid of I-ness, the aspirant is filled with the spirit of real contentment (*saṃtoṣa*), which is the second constituent of self-discipline. A discontented person continuously suffers from the sense of lack or non-achievement, and as a result he blames others for his failures or becomes jealous of them. It is within the frame of such dispositions that conflict of various kinds is given to rise. A person of such a frame of mind will never be at ease either with himself or with others or with the world. He is always at war with everyone, including himself. It is to avoid such a state of mind that Yoga has prescribed the path of contentment as the best adversarial antidote. Contentment, in comparison to discontentment, is such a state of mind whereby the spiritual seeker expects nothing from anyone or form the world, because he understands and knows that whatever is of the world is perishable. Knowing the perishable nature of the world and of bodily existence, the seeker seeks that that is imperishable. Thus a mind that is content is satisfied with what it has. It is a state that is spoken of by the *Bhagavadgītā* as that of evenness (*samatvā*). Evenness of mind indicates that a real spiritual person treats a piece of

gold in the same manner as he would a lump of clay. Sorrow and pleasure, success and failure, do not effect such a person of equanimity. Through evenness a seeker attains to the vision of samenss (*sama-darśana*). Therefore, "He whose self is yoked to Yoga and sees everywhere the same, sees the Self-abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self."[90]

The third constituent of self-discipline is austerity (*tapas*). The term *tapas* is derived from the root *tap* (to burn or to glow). *Tapas* as austerity is a method whereby are burnt such impurities that veil the luminosity of the Self. It is upon the burning of impurities that the man of austerity is in a position of appropriating such powers that are inherent to the cosmic structure. The ascetic (*tapasvin*), by appropriating the cosmic powers, attains the primal state of absolute autonomy. In the *Bhagavadgītā*[91] are enumerated the forms of asceticism thus:

> The words of the divinities, of the twice-born, of teachers and of the wise, purity, uprightness, continence and non-violence, this is said to be the austerity of the body.
> The utterance (of words) which gives no offence, which is truthful, pleasant and beneficial and regular of the Veda—this is said to be the austerity of speech.
> Serenity of mind, gentleness, silence, self-control, the purity of mind—this is called the austerity of mind.
> This threefold asceticism practised with utmost faith by men of balanced mind without the expectation of reward, they are called as *sattva*-natured.
> That austerity which is performed in order to gain respect, honour and reverence and for the sake of show is said to be *rajas*-natured, fickle and unsteady.
> That austerity which is performed with a foolish obstinacy by means of self-torture or for causing injury to others is said to be *tamas*-natured.

The fourth principle of self-discipline makes it quite clear that the study of sacred scriptures is one of the most important means of arriving at the ultimate goal of life, which is that of salvation. As to how to engage in the study of scriptural texts is learnt from a qualified and competent teacher. Once the art of studying a scriptural text is learnt, it then becomes possible for the seeker to study by himself the important scriptures. It is through the study of the scriptures that the seeker is enabled

to engage in self-study. The scriptural study does not merely mean acquiring the knowledge of the texts or amassing of intellectual information. It, rather, means gaining such an understanding of the sacred texts as would terminate in the deepening of meditative process. It is through the process of meditation that the wisdom of the sacred scriptures is appropriated. As to what the actual meaning of self-study is, is delineated by the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*[92] thus:

> From self-study one should proceed to Yoga and from Yoga to self-study. By perfection in self-study and Yoga the Supreme Self becomes manifest. Study is one eye of the Self, and Yoga is the other.

The last item of self-discipline is that of the worship of God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*). The worship of God hastens the process of emancipation. Vyāsa, in his commentary on the *Yogasūtra*,[93] explains the purpose of devotion to God. He writes:

> On account of devotion (to the Lord), (that is) through a particular love-attachment (*bhakti*) (towards him), the Lord inclines (towards the Yogī) and favours him alone by reason of his disposition (*abhidayāna*). By this disposition only the Yogī draws near to the attainment of ecstasy and the fruit of ecstasy.

Psychophysical Methods

The first two yogic methods of self-restraint and self-discipline are, by and large, ethical in nature. The purpose of these methods is to bring about such a change or transformation in the individual that it becomes easier for him to engage in the proper yogic exercises. The ethical principles are so devised as would be applicable to any human being who desires, first and foremost, to be human. To be human, at the theoretical level, basically means to understand as to what is the goal and purpose of existence in the world. It is upon understanding the nature of existence that an attempt is made at realising the existential goal in terms of making life in the world purposeful. To what extent life has become purposeful is dependent to what measure stability has been inserted in the changing and unstable modes of life. It is through the cultivation of the principles of self-restraint and of self-discipline that necessary

stability of conduct is achieved. To be stable in conduct means that sufficient degree of control has been gained over the whirls of the mind and over the senses. Once the senses and the mind have gained a degree of stability, the seeker can begin to follow the proper path of Yoga. The beginning of proper yogic way of life is made when the seeker steps into the realm of psychophysical methods, which consist of posture (*āsana*), breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) and withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*). Being psychophysical in nature, these methods have been termed as being exterior.

Āsana: As the *āsana* (posture) is basically concerned with the body, so the aim of this yogic method is to teach the aspirant as to how to learn the various bodily postures that are seen to be conducive for effecting easeful meditation. A bodily posture that is uncomfortable becomes the cause for mental disturbance, and accordingly the seeker is unable to engage in meditation. It is to avoid such pitfalls that the Yoga system has prescribed certain kinds of postures that it considers beneficial for meditation. The main goal of yogic posture, however, is to arrest the movement of the body by reducing it to the condition of immobility. It is upon immobilising the mobility of the body that the senses, too, are immobilised. The immobilisation of the senses would mean that the mind is no more subject to such stimulating sensations that make it agitative or restless. As the mind and body are closely related to each other, so it means that they also influence each other both directly and indirectly. It is this dependence upon, and relationship with, each other that the Yoga system, through the method of posture, wants to eliminate. Once the relating thread, which is the sensation of the sense organs, is cut asunder, then there occurs no feeding of the mind. This non-supply of sensations to the mind means the subduing of the whirls. Since lot of physical effort is involved in learning the art of posture, it thereby expresses the ascetical content of Yoga itself. It is in and through the burning heat of asceticism that the immobile condition of the body is achieved, and thereby both mind and body are deprived of the food, in the forms of sensations, that sustains them. Once the immobile condition of the body is achieved, the posture automatically becomes easeful. Accordingly

Patañjali defines posture as that which "is steady and easeful, hence it is not restricted."[94]

No detailed account concerning the number of bodily postures is to be found in the *Yogasūtra*. Vyāsa, however, speaks of such bodily postures in his commentary that have gained common currency, and some of them are the lotus-posture (*padma-āsana*), heroic posture (*vīra-āsana*), auspicious posture (*bhadra-āsana*), staff posture (*daṇḍa-āsana*), etc.[95] It was, however, Haṭhayoga, an offshoot of Tantricism, that gave a new push to the bodily postures by making them the basis of Yoga. For Haṭhayoga the bodily posture is not simply used as a means of achieving the condition of immobility. The method of posture, rather, is used for making the body strong and healthy. It is within this framework that Haṭhayoga invented quite a number of postures that are used for the purpose of cleansing the internal and external physical organs. It believes that only the one whose body is healthy can follow the path of Yoga—and to have a healthy body would also entail a healthy mind. Thus Haṭhayoga employed the bodily posture for the cultivation of what has come to be known as the culture of the body (*kāya-sādhanā*). The Haṭhayogic texts have prescribed countless postures for making body free from ailments. The number of postures that are considered beneficial for the maintenance of bodily health are said to be eighty-four. These days the techniques have gained commercial viability, and so are being marketed freely the world over for making a quick buck.

The art of the posture, according to the text of *Yogasūtra*, can only be learnt from a competent teacher (*guru*). It is *guru* who, through the process of initiatory rites, makes the postures causally efficacious. The fundamental purpose of the yogic posture is to gain steadiness and stability of mind and body. A body in movement is never at rest. As the aim of Yoga is to gain the state of tranquil rest (*viśrānti*), so the attainment of this rest is not possible unless the body-mind is restful. The tranquillity of the body-mind is effected when its movements are arrested, and this is achieved through the method of posture. For a Yogī mobile mind or body would mean its constant interaction with the world, and consequently the sense

stimulants cause disturbance and agitation in the mind. It is to avoid conflict, and thereby agitation, that the stillness of both body and mind are sought. When the body is steady, immobile and stable, it is easy for the Yogī to engage in the practice of breath-control. It is through constant practice of the prescribed posture that immobility is affected, which means that a "posture becomes perfect when the effort to attain it disappears, so that there are no movements in the body. In the same way, its perfection is achieved when the mind is transformed into infinity, viz., when it makes the idea of infinity its own content."[96]

The immobile condition of the body is achieved when, through the technique of posture, the diffused condition of the body is integrated by not allowing the different organs to do different things at the same time. When the body is mobile, hands, feet, eyes, ears, while engaged in their respective tasks, do not act synchronistically. The first task of posture is to synchronise the various actions of the body. Once the various actions of the body have been synchronised, it becomes thereby easier for the Yogī to bring about the condition of immobility in the body and the mind. A mind and body that is immobile leads to proper breath-control and to concentration.

The function of a yogic posture is fundamentally to enable a Yogī to gain complete control over the body by arresting or halting its normal functions. The posture is so devised as would lead its repeated use for prolonged periods of time to the suppression, nay elimination, of those functions of the body that are responsible in causing troublesome whirls in the mind. Cessation of the functions of the body results in what the Yogīs call the state of death while alive. In theological terms, this death is spoken of as the death of natural man. It is upon the death of natural man that a new man or being is given birth, which is linked to the new birth of man caused by grace. Dead to the appetites of the body, a Yogī lives and abides, as it were, in the supernatural realm of grace, a realm that is free from the distortions that sin has inserted in the realm of Nature. It is as a new man that a Yogī embarks on the real path of Yoga, which is characterised by inwardness and in terms of which the interior realm of spirituality is explored. The

distortions of sin in the realm of Nature express themselves through such human experiences as pain and pleasure, good and evil, profit and loss. It is upon transcending the dyadic realm of opposites that a Yogī sinks (*samāveśa)* in his own-being. As a result of this sinking is given rise to the state of sameness (*samatva*) whereby dualities of all kinds are transcended.

The yogic immobility of mind-body, thus, should be seen as being equivalent to the death of sinful man, which, from a theological and spiritual perspective, signifies the birth of a new being. It is this death to the natural man or to the conditioned existence that empowers the Yogī of gaining entrance into the supernatural realm of grace. It is through transcendence of the natural that a Yogī attains freedom from the conditioned. At the practical level of praxis a Yogī, through the immobility of the body, is able to stabilise the operations of the body. In other words, a yogic posture, upon its internalisation, terminates in the attainment of the immobility of the mind also. In the words of Eliade:

> (The) *āsana* is the first step taken for the purpose of abolishing the modalities of human existence. What is certain is that that motionless, hieratic position of the body imitates some other condition than the human; the yogin in the state of *āsana* can be homologised with a plant or a sacred statue; under no circumstances can he be homologised with man *qua* man, who, by definition, is mobile, restless, agitated, unrhythmic. On the plane of the body, *āsana* is an *ekārgata* (viz., one-pointedeness), a concentration on a single point; the body is tensed, concentrated in a single position. Just as *ekāgrata* puts an end to the mobility and disposability of the body, by reducing the infinity of possible positions to a single archetypal, iconographic posture.[97]

To the measure the immobility, and thereby the non-functionality, of the body is realised, to that measure correspondingly is achieved one-pointed concentration. The reduction in the mobility of the body also indicates the reduction of the whirls of the mind. The reduction of body-mind movements for a Yogī denotes the deepening of concentration. It is upon knowing to what extent concentration has deepened that a Yogī can measure the scale of stability. The mental and physical

stability is directly linked to the easefulness and steadiness of the yogic posture. The stability of the posture comes about "through the relaxation of the tensions and through the coincidence with the infinite (ether)."[98]

The steadiness of the mind and of the body may denote the reduction of movement, but it at the same time also denotes the expansion of consciousness. Consciousness in its empirical mode has a restricted field of operation. Due to its restricted role, empirical consciousness is unable to know that which is beyond or transcendent. By turning to itself, consciousness gains its cosmic stature, which means that it is no more bound to the restrictive laws of Nature. One of the results of the expansion of consciousness is that a Yogī gains awareness about the body as a field of throbbing energy. The moment a Yogī succeeds in steadying the mind-body complex, that very moment he crosses the borderline of opposites (*dvandva*) that are experienced at the empirical level.

The first definite historical indication about the use of yogic postures is the Paśupata-seal of the Indus. There is no doubt in the fact that the origin of yogic posture is archaic. The use of the word, however, appears for the first time in the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka* and the *Taittirīya* Upaniṣads.[99] In the *Bhagavadgītā*[100] the term *āsana* has been explained thus:

> Setting up a steady seat for himself in a pure place, neither too high nor too low, with a cloth, deer-skin or grass on it, there making the mind one-pointed, restraining the activity of the mind of the senses, he should, on the seat, yoke (himself) in Yoga for the purification of the self. Equable (*sama*), keeping trunk, head and neck motionless and steady, gazing at the tip of the nose, without looking round about him, (with) tranquil self and devoid of fear, steadfast in the vow of chastity, controlling the mind, thoughts on Me, (fully) yoked—he should sit, intent on Me.

Prāṇāyāma: The fourth limb of the Yoga system is that of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*). The aim of this limb is to make one-pointed concentration more effective at the psychophysical level. The very meaning of the term explains its function, which is to restrain and regulate the flow of outgoing and incoming breaths. The term *prāṇa*, in its yogic context, has a very wide

range of meaning. It is said that *prāṇa,* upon penetrating the universe, is known as constituting the vital impulse of all that is within the universe. It is said to be of the nature of compact mass of "vibratory energy" (*spanda-śakti*).[101]

It is completely erroneous to restrict the meaning of *prāṇa* to the functions of breathing. Breathing is just an external aspect of it. The term, in its yogic framework, signifies the spontaneous outpouring (*ucchalanā*) or movement of Being. It is, therefore, absolutely not right to restrict the role of *prāṇa* to the inhalation and exhalation of air (*vāyu*) or to the activity (*kriyā*) of the senses (*indriya*). Although homogeneous in its essence, *prāṇa,* however, expresses itself through the medium of the body in five different ways. And the five ways of expression are *prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna,* and *vyāna.* As the principle of animation, it is called *prāṇa.* It is as the principle of animation that it functions as incoming and outgoing breath, and is accordingly called *apāna.* It is by circulating itself in the body that *prāṇa* animates the entire physical organism, and this function is called that of *vyāna.* The continuation of life in the body is sustained by digesting the food that is eaten, and this function of the life-force is called that of *samāna.* And *udāna* explains that aspect or function of life-force that, at the time of physical death, separates the gross body from the subtle one. Conjointly the five functions of the life-force have been spoken of in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[102] as "the gate-keepers to the heavenly world." Thus the secret knowledge of the five aspects of life-force is seen as a *sine qua non* for reaching the Absolute. In Tantricism the secert knowledge of *prāṇa* would be considered as one of the most important means of awakening the dormant energy (*śakti*) called *kuṇḍalinī.* Accordingly specific techniques of breath-control are made use of for gaining access to this dormant energy.

The purpose of breath-control is to enable a Yogī not only to understand the functions of the life-force, but also, through the process of internalisation, to appropriate them. In one of the Haṭhayogic texts, namely, the *Gorakṣa-saṃhitā,*[103] is explained the activity of life force thus:

> As a bell hit by crook flies up, so consciousness, propelled by *prāṇa* and *apāna*, does not stand still.
> Under the impact of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, consciousness rushes up and down through the right and left pathways and on account of (this) fickleness cannot be perceived.
> As a hawk tied to a rope can be brought back again (when it has) flown away, so consciousness, bound by the primary constituents (*guṇa*), is pulled along by *prāṇa* and *apāna*.

The relationship that exists between consciousness and life-force and how life-force brings mind under control is described in the *Yogaśikhā Upaniṣad*[104] thus:

> Consciousness (*citta*) is connected with the life-force (*prāṇa*) indwelling in all beings. Like a bird tied to a string: so is this mind. The mind is not brought under control by many considerations. The (only) means for its control is nothing else but the life-force.

The necessity for breath-control must have arisen in the context of the knowledge of relationship that occurs between mind and consciousness. Insofar as consciousness remains in the state of diffusion, there is no possibility for it to turn inward, which, in other words, means that the diffusion of consciousness will continue to the measure the whirls of the mind are not brought under control. The mutual dependence of one upon the other would also mean of influencing mutually each other. The technique that Yoga has devised for effecting disjunction between mind and consciousness is that of breath-control. It is believed that the operations of the mind can be reduced to the point of non-existence, which simultaneously results in effecting inwardness of consciousness. This is so because by regulating the breathing process the mind too is regulated. The regulation of breathing and the mind has a direct impact upon the psychic activities of man. The first step that is taken in the direction of breath-control is not to breathe in a natural manner, which mainly is arhythmic. The natural flow of breathing is dependent upon the physical and emotional state of man. If one runs, for example, fast, the inhalation and exhalation would also be fast and of short duration. If one were emotionally excited, the pace of breathing, too, would

be quite fast. It is these alternating states of breathing that effect the mind. It is through the method of breath-control that a Yogī expects to bring order in breathing, and thereby make it initially rhythmic. Through repeated practice of breath-control a Yogī reaches a stage whereby he can stop breathing for long periods of time. As to what the method of breath-control is, is defined in the *Yogasūtra* (2.49) thus: "Thereupon the regulation of breath—the controlling (*vicheda*) of the cause of inhalation and exhalation."

The process of breathing involves outgoing and incoming breaths. The regulation of these two breaths initially consists of in synchronising them when the incoming breath is retained in the lungs. There occurs interruption in the process of normal breathing when the incoming breath is retained in the lungs. Initially the exercise of retention of breath is done for few seconds, which, over a period of time and through repeated practice, is extended for longer periods of time till breathing itself is stopped. Before retaining the incoming breath in the lungs, a Yogī slows down, through repeated practice, the respiratory rhythm.[105]

As consciousness and life-force are closely related to each other, so it is natural that the state of consciousness will be affected by breathing. And Bhoja brings out this aspect in his commentarty on the *Yogasūtra*[106] in the following words:

> The triple *prāṇa*-control, (consisting in) the phase of injection, expulsion and retention, binds consciousness (*citta*) to (a fixed) area through one-pointedness and by (reason of) the priority of the *prāṇa* activity in (relation to) all sense-activity, as also by (reason of) the coordination (which exists between) operation (*yoga*) and inactivity (*kṣema*) of mind and *prāṇa* in their respective functions. The suppressed *prāṇa* effects the one-pointedness of consciousness by means of the restriction of the entire sense-activity, and it causes the complex of defects (*doṣa*)[107] to dwindle, as we hear in the Scripture. And all negative (*vikṣepa*) is caused by the defects.

The relationship between consciousness and breathing can be observed from the fact that if, for example, a person is in agitated state of mind, the movement of respiration, too, is agitated. If, on the other hand, one is in deep absorption, the

movement of breathing is soft, slow and inaudible. The Yogī, by controlling, the movement of breathing is able to experience certain states of consciousness that are not available in the normal waking state. The more a Yogī prolongs the space between inhalation and exhalation, the more para-normal states of consciousness he is able to penetrate. It is through penetrating the different and higher states of consciousness that a Yogī synchronises them through the process of elimination of discontinuity between them. The unity among the different states of consciousness comes to be only when mastery over the method of breath-control has been achieved.

When a Yogī begins the practice of breath-control, his immediate goal is to achieve the continuous flow of consciousness. Yogic concentration is possible if the flow of consciounsess remains uninterrupted and constant. Normal process of respiration is arhythmic. The pace and movement of breath are dependent on the internal and external conditions that prevail at a given moment of time. Normal conditions, whether external or internal, always remain in a state of flux. When conditions vary from moment to moment, consciousness consequently gets diffused. To regulate breathing, and thereby the states of consciousness, the method of breath-control accordingly is employed. Rhythmic breathing and continuity in the flow of consciousness results in the deepening of absorptive concentration.

The Yogīs are of the view that the one who gains mastery over breath is empowered with the vision of comprehending the movemnt of life. It is so because breath regulation is such a method that is directed upon one's own organic life. Although the aim of Yoga is to know life, but this knowledge is not used for the purpose of living life in the world; rather it is made use of in such a way as would lead to the transcendence of life. The analysis of life begins when it is seen that the senses and the mind are responsible in diffusing the currents of life into various directions. The real inner harmony or peace is experienced when unification between the senses and the mind is achieved through one-pointed absorptive concentration. It is upon having the peaceful and harmonious experience within that a Yogī is in a position of levelling all the

uneven physiological and psychological activities. To the measure proficiency in the art of breath-control is obtained, to that measure is experienced the heightened presence of supernatural power.

There are, as already pointed out, three phases of breath-control, and they are inhalation (*pūraka*), exhalation (*recaka*) and the retention of the inhaled breath (*kumbhaka*). Respiration becomes rhythmic and controlled the moment there eventuates harmonisation of the three of phases of breath.[108] Complete and perfect harmony is achieved when all the three phases consume as well as occupy equal space. Through arduous practice, a Yogī ultimately is able to suspend the process of breathing as such. When the suspension of breathing is achieved in a perfect order, there simultaneously occurs complete cessation of the activities of the mind as well as of the senses. To arrive at this point of proficiency is a great achievement for a practising Yogī. It is through this achievement that there "is destroyed that which hides the light."[109]

The total immobility of the body and of the mind results in making the mind empty of whatever contents it may be containing within itself. This contentless state of the mind occurs when absorption delinks consciousness from its intentional activities. The yogic posture, therefore, should be seen as a refusal to conform to the natural dispositions of the mind-body complex. By refusing to adhere to the conventional norms of the terms of the psychophysiological functions of the mind-body, a Yogī thereby dissociates himself from that that is natural or what we may call human.

Pratyāhāra: The fifth important limb of the Yoga system is that of abstraction. The moment a Yogī becomes proficient in the methods of yogic posture and breath-control, that very moment the bodily sense organs become less and less prone to the external stimuli. In other words, it means that the sensitivity of the bodily organs to the external stimuli is retarded to the extent the Yogī succeeds in immobilising, through posture and breath-control, mind-body complex. The techniques of posture and of breath-control prepare the ground for the maturation of concentration (*ekāgrata*). Through

absorptive concentration, a Yogī comes to know the nature of embodied existence. The external immobility of the body is brought about by the practice of posture, whereas the internal immobility of the mind results from a prolonged practice of breath-control. By arresting the functions of the body and of the mind, the field of consciousness is restricted to a single point of concentration. Through internal and external immobility and deep concentration, a Yogī is able to appropriate such a mode of life that frees him from his human condition.

The process of abstraction (*pratyāhāra*) may be compared to the withdrawal of a tortoise into his own shell. Self-abstraction is a process of delinking the senses from their corresponding objects,[110] which means that the senses are deprived of the food that the fluids of sensation provide. The purpose of delinking the senses from their object is to free the Yogī from the enticement that sensations give rise to by causing whirls in the mind. The untamed senses are like the wild horse, and as a result of their wildness, they continuously keep the mind in the state of unrest. The senses have to be so tamed as would not cause trouble in the mind.[111] If the senses are allowed to run riot, the consequences are going to be disastrous. Accordingly warns the *Bhagavadgītā*.[112]

> Direct contact with the sense-object comes into being when man assimilates and appropriates them. The contact with the sense-objects gives rise to desire, and desire breeds anger.
> Born is delusion from anger, from delusion comes the disorder of the memory, and from the disorder of the memory destruction of the intellect is bound to occur. Lost is the man whose intellect is destroyed.

The *Bhagavadgītā*[113] explains further as to how is affected the withdrawal of the senses from their corresponding sense-objects thus:

> Cutting off the contact with the external things and fixing the sight between the eye-brows, making even the inhalation and exhalation passing through the nostrils. The sage is truly liberated whose senses, thought-organ and intelligence are under control.

Once the Yogī succeeds in withdrawing the senses from their corresponding sense-objects, he thereby moves and lives in a world that is different from the one that is encountered, experienced and perceived through the different organs of the body. Transported existentially to a supersensuous realm, the Yogī thereby achieves complete freedom from his conditioned existence. It is a form of existence that may be compared, at the human level, to a lifeless statue. The Yogī achieves this feat by making successful use of the method of withdrawal from the world by depriving the senses and the mind of their essential food. Immobile and lifeless like a statue, a Yogī is so absorbed in himself that he is totally forgetful about the physical condition of his body. It is the withdrawal of the senses that deepens the depth of concentration, and as a consequence is realised what we may call abstraction. As to what withdrawal is, is defined by the *Yogasūtra*[114] thus:

> When the senses are no longer in contact with their objects, they come to resemble the (inhibited) mind, this is what constitutes abstraction. From that comes the complete obedience of senses.

To paraphrase this definition, it means that when the senses are withdrawn from their respective fields of activity, the only field of activity that remains, in the words of Pratima Bowes, for the mind is "the mental continuum of thoughts, feelings and volitions, fed by impressions of the nature of subconscious impulses and drives."[115] It is a situation in which the senses, instead of directing themselves towards their respective objects, turn upon themselves by abandoning the role that has been assigned to them by Nature. Even though the senses are no longer engaged in their respective roles, the mind, however, receives the sensory representations. The mind knows the external world not through the senses, but through its own powers. The knowledge of the objects, which the mind obtains through the power of concentration, is said to be far more real and authentic than the one that is derived through sense-based knowledge. It is a state of mind in which the supersensuous wisdom (*prajñā*) of the Yogin knows the reality of objectivity as it is in itself.[116]

The withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects is the last yogic limb in the psychophysiological practice. The path of yogic practice henceforth is expected to be free from the impediments or thorns of the flesh and the thistles of the mind. The mind, which as a psychic mass orders and illumines the sense data, serves now as a mirror of reflection for objects that are reflected upon it. Freed from the impact of the senses, the mind is said to abide in itself (*svarūpa-mātra*). The dissociation of the mind from the exterior world does not mean that the objective world ceases to exist. Such a view would be sheer solipsism. The mind, through its own power, still contemplates or reflects the world in the manner of reflection in a mirror. Prior to the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects, the Yogī contemplates the world through forms and mental acts. But now the Yogī contemplates the essence (*tattva*) of objects directly.

Subjective Methods

Free from the external stimuli of the senses and from the subconscious impressions, a Yogī, through absorptive concentration, is in a position of making use of threefold yogic techniques, called *saṃyama,* simultaneously. The *saṃyama* includes the last three subjective methods of concentration, meditation and enstasis. The last yogic limb, namely, that of enstasis, should not be viewed as a technique. The emergence of this limb, rather, is the successful result or fruit of the exertion of rest of the limbs. The limb of enstasis constitutes the goal of the yogic path. The practice of the subjective methods is facilitated when a Yogī achieves total immobility of mind and body by reducing the senses and the mind to the condition of a lifeless statue. The three subjective methods, being mental, do not differ much from each other. Once a Yogī, for example, has deepened absorptive concentration, he will automatically find himself slipping into the state of yogic meditation. It is for this reason that the last three subjective methods have collectively been called as *saṃyama*.

Dhāraṇā: The sixth yogic limb is that of abstract concentration (*dhāraṇā*). This method of abstract concentration is similar to *ekāgrata* or one-pointed concentration. The difference

between the two methods of concentration lies in the fact that the one-pointed concentration is brought about by fixing attention on a concrete object, whereas the abstract concentration (*dhāraṇā*) emerges by focussing attention on an abstract notion or idea. Abstract concentration, in the words of Patañjali,[117] is a fixation of thought on a single abstract idea. The stage of abstract concentration is given rise to when a Yogī "does not hear, smell, taste, see, does not sense touch, and his mind no longer conceptualises (*saṃkalpayate*)."[118] From this explantion we learn that abstract concentration is dependent to what extent the senses, through the method of withdrawal, have become dead and the body, through the method of posture, has become immobile. The Yogī loses the capacity of experiencing any kind of sensation only when the body achieves the condition of non-movement and the senses lose the capacity of being stimulated. It is upon the attainment of such a state that abstract concentration emerges.

A Yogī, upon stepping into abstract concentration, gains total freedom from the enslaving impact of the external world, which, at the practical level of life, means that a Yogī is no more subservient either to the sense-based experiences or to the drives of the mind. From this stage of abstract concentration the Yogī begins the exploration of the inner world of the spirit. The purpose of inner exploration is to arrive at the state of unification in terms of which the Self is made to shine forth in its own glory. In order to let the Self shine forth in its own-being, the Yogī has to remove the veils of concealment that conceal the illuminating glow of the Self. The removal of the veils is achieved by cultivating successfully the ethical and psychophysical methods as well as by making an inward journey through the three subjective stages of abstract concentration (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and enstasy (*samādhi*). These three limbs or inward stages, on account of their inwardness, are spoken of as the limbs belonging to interiority (*antar-aṅga*).

The yogic meaning that has been assigned to the term *dhāraṇā* is fixation of thought on a point that is abstract or notional. This explanation of the *Yogasūtra* is elaborated by Vyāsa[119] in the following words:

> Concentration is the fixing of consciousness—merely (in the form of its) fluctuations (*vṛtti*)—to the navel center, the lotus of the heart, the light in the head, the tip of the nose, the tip of the tongue or similar 'places' or to an external object.

Vācaspatimiśara has clarified it further by saying:

> On this there is also (a fitting statement) in the (*Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, 6.7.45): 'After the wind' (viz., the life-force) is controlled through the regulation of *prāṇa* and the senses through sense-withdrawal (the Yogī) should let his consciousness rest on an appropriate 'prop.'

By now it should be clear that the abstract concentration is characterised by an orientation in terms of which consciousness is kept so fixed as to be immobile. In fixing consciousness on a single point, a Yogī thereby actualises complete rupture with the intentional content of consciousness. It is through this rupture that a Yogī obtains the necessary breakthrough in the disclosure of Being.

The Self, at the stage of abstract concentration, holds itself as an object of concentration to itself. It means that, at this stage, concentration is not yet so refined as would facilitate the removal of the veils of concealment, which means that the shining of the Self does not occur at this stage. This is so because thought is still fixed on an external object, although the fixation of thought may be abstract. It is at the level of meditation (*dhyāna*) that the external props are totally abandoned, and so a Yogī plunges into the essence of thought that results in complete abstract absorption.

Dhyāna: A Yogī steps into proper yogic meditation (*dhyāna*) when he succeeds in reducing the diffusive condition of consciousness to a fixed point of thought. It is by restricting the diffusiveness of consciousness that a Yogī turns consciousness upon itself through concentration. The turning of consciousness upon itself in terms of introversion is proficiently achieved when the point of concentration, which is abstract thought, and consciousness become so fused as to result in the awareness of the unity of Being. It is in terms of this awareness that Patañjali has defined yogic meditation as a "current of unified thought."[120] Vyāsa[121] has explained this definition of

Patañjali concerning yogic meditation as a "continuum of mental effort in order to assimilate the object of meditation, free from any other effort to assimilate the other objects." A Yogī, at the level of yogic meditation, penetrates the essence of the object, or should we say that he extracts the essence from the object. The deep absorptive condition of yogic meditation is such that a Yogī gains such a vision whereby is disclosed the essence of Being. It is in and through yogic meditation that the unity of thought and of Being is realised.[122]

The state of yogic meditation, which is of absorptive nature, is reached upon the elimination of the whirls of the mind. And the elimination of the whirls of the mind is achieved through having successfully cultivated the ethical and psychophysical limbs of Yoga. The whirls of the mind are cognitive, conative and volitional in nature. The threefold forms of whirls express themselves through five ways, namely, knowledge (*pramāṇa*) that is gained through such means as perception, inference and verbal testimony, error (*viparyāya*), conceptualisation (*vikalpa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and memory (*smṛti*).[123] The first two operations of the mind—empirical knowledge and error—are transcended at the level of withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects, and this level corresponds to the yogic limb of *pratyāhāra*. Insofar as conceptualisation is concerned, it continues its existence, even though it may be in a dim manner, till the stage of yogic meditation is reached. It is at the level of deep absorptive yogic meditation that thinking is completely transcended.

The greatest impediment or obstacle that a Yogī confronts is that of sleep. It is not easy to overcome the hurdle of sleep. It can be overcome through the ascetical heat of resistance, which means of maintaining vigil in terms of awareness of the opposite of sleep, which is wakefulness. Wakefulness is the symbol of spiritual awakening—and a true Yogī is one who is always awake. To be awake means never to be forgetful of what is real. The other fluctuation that can prove as an obstacle in the path of yogic meditation is memory, and memory is the container or womb of what we know, what we feel, what we experience, etc. Memory brings out from some hidden corner

of the mind the past events the moment a Yogī begins to turn inwards. Memory, by activating the residual impressions and latent sensations from the subconscious, creates such hurdles that do not allow consciousness to sink into its own depth. It is gross (*sthūla*) aspect of memory that is, slowly and steadily, overcome upon the deepening of yogic meditation.[124] Insofar as the subtle aspect of memory is concerned, it is transcended at the level of yogic enstasy.

The complete process of elimination (*nirodha*) of the whirls of the mind is achieved through the three phases of practice. At the initial stage of practice such whirls are eliminated that are dependent upon the sense stimuli. The whirls of this type are said to be gross on account of their dependence upon external causality. At the second stage of practice are eliminated such whirls that are of instantaneous awareness (*pratyaya*). At the third stage of practice are eliminated such whirls that originate from the seed (*bīja*), viz., the whirls that owe their causal origin to subliminal impressions (*saṃskāra*). The triple method that is employed for the elimination of three types of whirls is:

1. *Vṛtti-nirodha* is a method of restricting the whirls at the surface level, viz., only such whirls are restricted that have an external causal origin.

2. *Pratyaya-nirodha* is employed for the restriction of such whirls that are subtle and are of the nature of thought.

3. *Saṃskāra-nirodha* is such a method of restricting the whirls that are dependent for their origin on the latent impressions in the mind.

It is now clear that the purpose of all the yogic limbs, whether physical or mental, is to clear the mind from such thistles and thorns that prove to be impediments to a Yogī in arriving at the ultimate yogic state of enstasy (*samādhi*). This is accomplished by making use of such methods that immobilise both mind and body, and through immobilisation are restricted the operations of the mind in their totality when the stage of absorptive meditation is reached. In the *Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad*[125] is explained as to how a Yogī reaches the state of absorptive meditation in these words:

> One should duly (in accordance with the instructions of the Guru) practise concentration on *Oṃ* (first) through the means of letters (A, U, M of which *Oṃ* is composed), then meditate on *Oṃ* (viz., on the meaning of *Oṃ*) without regard to its letters. Finally, on the realisation with the latter form of meditation of *Oṃ*, the idea of non-entity (viz., the world of name and form) is attained as Entity (viz., the Self).

Samādhi: The final limb of Yoga that a Yogī has to traverse is that of *samādhi* or enstasy. It is upon reaching the state of enstasy that the other two subjective limbs—*dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*—fructify. It is in the mystical state of enstasy that a Yogī reaches his final soteric goal. For a Yogī the experience that results from this state is that of "isolation" of the Self, whereas for a non-dualist Vedāntin or for a Tāntrika the experience is that of unity or of openness of Being. For the Yogī of a theistic disposition the mystical experience that he has is that of loving union with God. It boils down to the fact that the mystical experience a Yogī has upon reaching the state of enstasy is interpreted in terms of what kind of theological disposition is entertained by him. The interpretive colouring of the mystical experience, thus, is dependent upon the subjective dispositions of the mystic. It is the variety of interpretations of the enstatic experience that makes it difficult to explain as to what exactly the term *samādhi* signifies or means. This ambiguity and complexity of the term would mean that it cannot be defined in a straightforward manner.

The term *samādhi*, on the one hand, encapsulates such a mystical experience that is inexpressible and, on the other hand, cannot simply be restricted to a single type of mystical experience. The texture of the mystical experience that a Yogī has, when in enstatic state, is interpreted in reference to the faith-content that is being followed or entertained. It is really the faith-content that determines the interpretive texture of the experience, which means that we can never know what the experience in itself is. What we know concerning the mystical experience is in terms of the interpretive content that is inserted in terms of the faith-content of the Yogī. If the mystical experience of the enstatic state is seen from the perspective of a Yogī of Sāṃkhya-Yoga persuasion, then the experience that results from this state is in terms of

consciousness dircetly apprehending the essence of objects without the support of imagination (*kalpanā*) or intelligence (*buddhi*). For a Yogī of this type the knowledge that he has emerges when the object opens up itself to consciousness. It is a knowledge that reveals or discloses the object, and so is accordingly termed as revelatory knowledge. Thus the knowledge that is acquired is revelation, in that the revelation that emerges is in terms of essence and non-essence.[126] Thus the mystical knowledge that is given to rise by the absorptive meditative enstasis is not in terms of a dualism that differentiates the act of meditation from the object of meditation. It is a state of experience in which, through mystic intuition, the object of knowledge and the knowledge of the object are so unified as would not be possible for the objects to present themselves to consciousnes as external phenomena. The mystical state of enstasy, in the words of Vijñānabhikṣu,[127] is arrived at "when yogic meditation (*dhyāna*) is delivered from the separate notions of meditation, the object of meditation, and the meditating subject and sustained solely in the form of the object meditated on." Enstasy, in the words of *Yogasūtra*,[128] is a state in which consciousness "shines forth as the sole reality." Vidyāraṇya, in his *Pañcadaśī*,[129] explains the nature of enstatic experience in these words:

> By gradually giving up (the distinction between) the meditator and meditative absorption, the sphere of the object alone (shines forth in consciousness) and consciousness resembles a lamp in a windless (place)—that is designated as enstasy.

The experimental knowledge of Reality that a Yogī acquires in the state of enstasy must never be confused with knowledge that is acquired through empirical means. The enstatic knowledge, being nonempirical, is a revealed knoweldge of the Self, which means that the Self reveals itself to itself in this nondiscursive state of consciousness. In enstasy is revealed the Self through the transcendence of the very act of experience. The revelation of the Self occurs in a specific kind of enstasy. It is for this reason that Patañjali has given a list of the grades of enstatic experience. When the state of enstasy is reached with the help of thought or imagination, it is called the deter-

minate enstasy (*svavikalpa-samādhi* or *samprajñatā-samādhi*), viz., a mode of enstatic experience in which thought still is operational, and so the experience is still characterised by the subject-object dualism.[130] When, on the other hand, the state of enstasy is reached without the help of thought, it is called the indeterminate enstasy (*nirvikalpa-samādhi* or *asamprajñatā-samādhi*), viz., an enstatic state in which thought is totally transcended, and is abandoned the duality that is given rise to by thought. The former kind of enstasy does not terminate in the full disclosure of the Self. The soteric liberation that results from the experience of this enstatic state is of partial type. It is so because the subconscious forces and sensations are still operating, though dimly, in the mind. Insofar as the latter kind of enstasy is concerned, it is such a mystical state in which are completely destroyed all the residues of active and latent impressions, drives and desires of the subconscious mind. It is a state in which the mind attains to complete emptiness, and as a result of this occurs the full revelation of the Self. This full revelation of the Self terminates in the soteric liberation that is perfect and total.[131]

From the above analysis it becomes quite clear that there are grades of enstatic experience. Broadly speaking, enstasy, acording to the *Yogasūtra*, is of two kinds: enstasy that eventuates through the help of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*, and enstasy that emerges without any prop and so is spontaneous. However, to slip from the former state of enstasy into the latter one is not very difficult. The transition from determinate to indeterminate state of enstasy can be effortless. It is upon reaching the indeterminate state that the soteric goal of Yoga is reached—and the goal consists of in experiencing consciousness as an undifferentiated mass of revealing knowledge. In order to know as to what enstasy is, we will have, first, to understand as to what is constitutive of determinate enstasy. It is upon knowing the constitutive elements of determinate enstasy that we can then make an effort at knowing as to what indeterminate enstasy is. Insofar as determinate enstasy is concerned, it is said to consist of the following constitutive elements.[132]

1. *Vitarka* is a process in terms of which consciousness still identifies itself with the gross (*sthūla*) aspect of the object.

2. *Nirvitarka* represents such a process of identification of consciousness with the gross aspect of the object in which the awarencess of the object disappears.

3. *Vicāra* represents the process of identification of consciousness with the subtle (*sūkṣma*) aspect of the object.

4. *Nirvicāra* represents the complete fusion between consciousness and the inner essence of the object without having any awareness of the object.

The determinate enstasis is the representative of such a mystical experience in which the intuitive cognition of the Transcendent is activated. This intuitive awakening towards the Transcendent may express either through cognitive knowledge (*vitarka*) or through reflective thinking (*vicāra*). Both the ways of expressing the awareness of the Transcendent is of the nature of lucidity. The cognitive knowledge of the Transcendent that these two modes express must never be equated with knowledge that is dependent on the intellect or on the senses. The thought of the transcendent awakening is pure, lucid and spontaneous. The cognitive knowledge of the Transcendent is characterised by the awareness of unity with the object of meditation in its essentials. An object of meditation could be a soild entity, an idea or a word. All the aspects of the object are experienced, in the pocess of meditation, as being in harmony with each other as well as with the mind of the Yogī. By assimilating the gross aspect of the object, a Yogī thereby is enabled to cognise the object of meditation. The appropriation of the object in its gross aspect is unmediated (*sākṣātkāra*). The appropriation is not restricted to the present structure of the object, but is extended to the past and future forms of the object also.[133] The Yogī, upon the transcendence of *vitarka-samādhi*, steps into what is called the *nirvitarka-samādhi*. Patañjali[134] explains this state of determinate enstasis thus:

> On washing off memory (when the conventions of name and idea, conveyed by the object, fall off from the object), as if, devoid of its own-being the object alone is illuminated; (this is known as) *nirvitarka-samādhi*.

A Yogī has to proceed further if he is desirous of knowing the essence of Being. From *nirvitarka-samādhi* the next step that a Yogī has to undertake is to step into the *vicāra-samādhi*. At this level of enstasis the outer shell, which is gross, of the object is unable to restrict the penetrating flight or capacity of consciousness. Consciousness is so powerful at this stage as to be able to penetrate the object, and thereby are apprehended those infinitesimal nuclei of energy (*tanmātra*) that constitute the essence of the apprehended object. The content of this experiential enstasis can be understood only in the context of Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontology. The reality of the object that is being perceived by the senses is not restricted to what the senses perceive. It has, rather, an inner and hierarchical dimension. The hierarchical structure of Nature extends over the entire range of what is manifest, viz., from the state of potentiality to that of actuality. It includes intelligence, ego, mind, senses, etc. It is an ontology that explains the scheme from the One to the Many, from the unmanifest to manifest, from potentiality to actuality.

The inner core or essence of the object is disclosed to the Yogī when he steps into what is called the reflective enstasis (*vicāra-samādhi*). From this state of enstasis the Yogī steps into an enstasis that is devoid of reflective thought (*nirvicāra-samādhi*). At this level of enstasis a Yogī successfully transcends the conventional modes of knowledge, viz., name, form and idea.[135] The intuitive experience that eventuates at this stage is compared to autumnal lucidity (*vaiśāradya*).[136] Accordingly is the intuitive gnosis of this state spoken of as being truth-bearing (*ṛtambhra*).[137] It is at this level of enstasis that complete cessation (*sarva-nirodha*) of the whirls of the mind is realised.[138] The very cessation of whirls means that there occurs abolition of intentional consciousness during the period the Yogī remains absorbed in this state. The abolition or suspension of intentional consciousness means the emergence of transcendental awareness. This state is the summit of determinate enstasis—and from this state a Yogī steps into the indeterminate enstasis (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*). It is at the threshold of the determinate enstasis that the essence of Being (*sattva*) shines forth in such a manner as if the Self is shining in its ownbeing.[139]

Since determinate *samādhi* is not completely devoid of thought, so it is termed as enstasis with seed (*bīja-samādhi*) or dependent enstasis (*sālambana-samādhi*). The determinate enstasis is so spoken because of its dependence on some kind of a supportive substratum. As a consequence of this dependence there arise in this state movements, in the form of seeds, for the future activity of consciousness. It is, however, at the level of determinate enstasis that there opens up for the Yogī the "truth-bearing faculty of knowledge."[140] As a result of the emergence of truth-bearing faculty there is initiated movement towards the actualisation of indeterminate enstasis (*nirvikalpa-samādhi*). As the indeterminate enstasis is undifferentiated in character, so it is free from the potential seeds that are the bane of determinate enstasis. It is for this reason that indeterminate enstasis is spoken of as being seedless (*nirbīja*). Established firmly in the undifferentiated state of enstasis, a Yogī has the thoughtless experience of unity of knowledge, viz., being and knowledge is not experienced as discrete. The Yogī's consciousness (*citta*) has the direct revelation (*sākṣāt-kāra*) of the Self (*puruṣa*). Upon having unmediated revelation of the Self, the Yogī gains complete freedom from the pain-giving structure called *saṃsāra*.[141]

The Yogī, upon the complete elimination, nay uprooting, of whatever subliminal traces or desires are in the subconscious mind, experiences the undifferentiated aspect of consciousness. It is at that point of spiritual ascension that a Yogī steps into the indeterminate enstasis when the residual traces, active or latent, have been burnt in the ascetical fire of yogic praxis. The elimination of residual traces means that a Yogī has a new spiritual birth in terms of new being.

The undifferentiated enstasy reaches its culmination in what is called the *dharma-megha-samādhi*. At this level is experienced the exuberance of joy—and this joy is the result of the dissociation between consciousness and the objects of perception. The experience of joy is of the nature of infinite luminosity. It is a state in which the Yogī experiences the returning back of the primary constituents (*guṇa*) of Nature (*prakṛti*) to their potential or unmanifest condition. It is a state in which the

Yogī apprehends the Self in its sattvic or luminous aspect. When the Yogī's intelligence is not dependent for knowledge on external objects, when it reflects only the Self, then the experience of the indeterminate enstasis is called *asmitānugata.* It is a state of experience in which the Yogī understands the authentic meaning of the sentence: I am other than body.[142] It is a state of experience in which the fulness of Being is cognised in its totality.

The undifferentiated or contentless experience of consciousness of the indeterminate enstatic state can occur either by practising the yogic path of inward introversion or it can occur spontaneously (*bhāva*).[143] For the attainment of this state a Yogī makes use of specific psychophysical methods (*upāya*), whereas disembodied beings, like gods, reach this experiential goal naturally. However, all the commentators think that the path of Yoga is far superior to the spontaneous or natural way.

The realisation of seedless enstasis (*nirbīja-samādhi*) results in the illumination of the Self, which means the dissociation of the Self from Nature and its products. As a result of this dissociation the Self attains to the state of "isolation" (*kaivalyaṃ*), which, in other words, signifies total detachment. It would be wrong to assume that the contentless enstasis is characterised by complete vacuity. It is a condition that expresses both the "state" and the "knowledge." As a state, it denotes the absence of objects in consciousness, which is not to say that consciousness is empty. Instead of emptiness, consciousness has a direct intuitive knowledge or revelation of Being. The elimination of the operations of the mind, in the context of Yoga, should not be seen as the abolition of existence. Instead what happens is the apprehension of the substratum of existence. This direct apprehension of the substratum is equivalent to saying that it is non-intellectual, and therefore consciousness is said to be seedless. As an unconditioned state, it is no more an "experience," as consciousness has withdrawn from the experient. As such it is termed as being the state of "revelation," in that intelligence, by withdrawing from the world, returns unto Nature in its primordiality. In this situation the Self regains autonomy, and

consequently contemplates itself. This freedom of the Self from the effects of Nature is termed as soteric freedom. The Yogin, like a dead person, has nothing to do with the conditioned existence, as he has become liberated-in-life (*jīvan-mukta*).[144]

If it is assumed that the indeterminate enstasis is contentless, devoid of thought, then it is difficult to determine or explain what it actually is. The difficulty is already perceived by the Upaniṣads where it has been compared to deep sleep. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.44) is made the following analysis concerning deep sleep:

> As a falcon or eagle, having flown about there in space, fatigued, folds its wings and repairs to its eyrie, just so hasten the *puruṣa* to that border(-state) where, asleep, he desires no desires and sees no dream (-picture). This is his (own-)form in which he, beyond desires, is free from sin and fear. For, as one, when embraced by a beloved wife, is not conscious of what is within and without, so also this *puruṣa*, embraced by the Self-Awarencess (*prajñā-ātman*), does not know what is within or without. This is his (own-)form in which he is desire-fulfilled (*āpta-kāma*), desirous of the Self and (yet) without desires.

It is said that consciousness, in the state of deep sleep, returns to its primordial condition, or, should we say, to the womb of the transcendent awareness. It is a return in which the veils of ignorance, which are operative in the waking state, are negativised. Therefore, it is a state of consciousness in which is cognised the fact that the "function of ignorance is in the realm of ignorance."[145]

The yogic enstasy differs from deep sleep, in that the external involution of consciousness is an attempt whereby there occurs awakening towards Self-Awareness. Empirically consciousness may be reduced to the state of non-function, but inwardly there occurs its expansion, and it is in terms of expansion that the revelation of the Self occurs. In fact, it is not right to speak of enstasis as a "state," because the substratum that is recovered in this so-called state is the basis of all the states of consciousness. In indeterminate enstasis there is a complete "cessation of phenomenality" (*prapañca-upaśama*).[146] Through the cessation of phenomenality is trans-

cended the conditioned existence, and the transcendence of empirical mode of existence does not mean that one is landed in sheer nothingness. It, rather, means the non-existence of conditioned reality—a reality that is the product of space and time. Patañjali[147] speaks of indeterminate enstasis as that which "follows upon the practice of the cessation of the awareness (*pratyāya*) (which means only) a residuum of activities (*saṃskāra*)." As these words of Patañjali are obscure, so Vyāsa[148] explain thus:

> . . . the higher (type) of dispassion (*vairāgya*) is the means to the (supreme enstasy). Since the practice with support (viz., determinate enstasis) is unsuited as an instrument (to reach emancipation), the non-objective cessation of the (enstatic) awareness is taken as support. And this enstasy is devoid of objects. The unsupported consciousness accompanying this practice becomes as it were non-existent.

It is upon the realisation of non-objective enstasis that the "eye of knoweldg" (*jñāna-cakṣu*) is opened up. It is through the divine eye (*divya-cakṣu*) that emancipation in terms of freedom from the conditioned existence is actualised.[149] The goal of yogic liberation is characterised by total withdrawal from phenomenality as such. Says Patañjali (1.49)

> The resorption of the primary constituents (which have become) devoid of purpose for the Self is (called) isolation, or the power of consciousness abiding in its own-being.

The cessation or disappearance of the phenomenal, in the context of Yoga, takes place when consciousness withdraws from the world, and thereby is initiated backward movement within consciousness, which terminates in the resorption of the manifestables into their primordial condition. It is a condition that availed prior to the process of evolutionary manifestation of Nature as categories of existence. In Advaita Vedānta the abolition of the phenomenal categories is accomplished through the penetration of five sheaths (*pañca-kośa*), which are the physcial sheath (*annamaya-kośa*), vital sheath (*prāṇamaya-kośa*), mental sheath (*manomaya-kośa*), consciousness sheath (*vijñānamaya-kośa*), and the blissful sheath (*ānandamaya-*

kośa). It is these five coverings that, as it were, give rise to phenomenality. Upon the negation of these sheaths, there remains only the "witnessing consciousness."[150] Whether it is the yogic or the Vedāntic way, the result is identical, which is the abolition of phenomenality. And in this abolition lies the fulfilment of the soteric search, which is the attainment of liberation from conditionedness.

From the discussion that has been conducted so far it becomes explicit that the text of Yoga system may be properly appreciated and understood in the context of its goal—and the goal is nothing less than to liberate an individual existent from the undeserving existing condition, which is that of bondage. It is in deconditioning man's life from mental and physical accretions that the final or transcendent freedom is realised. To achieve this state of absolute autonomy from the subjugating and dehumanising conditions of existence, Yoga has devised a number of practical methods—and these methods are so devised as would suit psychophysical aspects of man. Considering the natural mode of existence as being painful, Yoga, in addition to the practical psychophysical methods, also prescribes such ethical rules of self-restraint and self-discipline that are very conducive for the practice of contemplative meditation. The system of Yoga is of the view that the embodied life will be painful to the measure subservience to Nature is accepted. It is in revolting against what Nature has imposed that real autonomy can be realised. And this revolt is given expression in following a way of life that is non-natural. Since Nature is characterised by motion and movement, so Yoga desires a mode of life that is devoid of motion, namely, a life that is immobile. It is for the purpose of realising this unnatural mode of life that Yoga has devised such psychophysical methods that are useful in bringing about cessation of movement. Upon the cessation of bodily movement, the Yoga system takes the next step, which is to eliminate operations of the mind. In this manner are both bodily and mental functions brought to standstill.

The cessation of the movement of the mind would mean that the mind is emptied of its content. A contentless mind comes to be through the hastening of concentration, and it is

through concentration that absorptive meditation, in terms of introversion of consciousness, is realised. As a result of this is experienced the revelation of the Self as being detached and completely in isolation. However, for a Vedāntin the revelation of the Self discloses the unity of Being, whereas for a theist it signifies the experience of living union with God. In whatever way the mystical experience of the revelation of Self is interpreted, the net-result is the same, which is freedom from the limiting conditions of embodied existence, or what is called saṃsāric bondage.

All the yogic limbs, from self-restraint to enstasy, that a Yogī has to traverse are dissociative in character. The Yogī begins the practice of dissociation by depriving himself of basic human needs. The very deprivation of both body and mind visualises the ascetical temper of yogic way of life. It is through the furnace of ascetical heat that a Yogī gains the power of purifying both mind and body from the natural food that sustains them. In other words, depriving them of their natural food effects purification of mind and body, which are the sensations and impressions of the senses. The real process of deprivation begins with the method of posture and continues till meditative absorption is reached. Once the process of deprivation has been completed, a Yogī accordingly steps out from the limiting factors of space-time continuum into the cosmic realm. However, this cosmicisation of consciousness does not terminate in the experience of liberation. To achieve soteric liberation, a Yogī has to return to his own centre, which means of going beyond the field of experience.

The state of liberation is enstatic in nature. At the enstatic stage a Yogī recovers the Self. The recovery of the Self means that there is a complete unity between knowledge and being, between act and thought. In other words, liberation from conditioning factors of phenomenality signifies for a Yogī a return to the beginningless non-time. It is a return in terms of freedom from the natural restrictions or limitations. In the natural order of being this freedom, which is unrestricted, is not available. It is by dying to the natural order that the untainted freedom of Being is realised. The purpose of yogic way of life is actualised when a Yogī completely dissociates

himself from the natural or the phenomenal. Death to the phenomenal signifies a new birth—and it is in and through new birth that Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*saccidānanda*) is realised as being the essential nature of what we actually are.[151]

References

1. Patañjali himself says that he is not the first inventor of the system of Yoga (cf. *Yogasūtra*, 1.1: *atha yogānuśāsanaṃ*). This viewpoint of Patañjali as not being the actual inventor, but only a systematiser of the system of Yoga establishes the fact that, prior to Patañjali, the elements of Yoga were in existence, but were in the state of diffusion. This line of thinking has now been accepted by the modern world of scholarship. It is in this regard that N.V. Joshi writes: "The *Yoga Darśana* of Patañjali is an attempt to systematise the axiological conceptions, which were cherished not only in his own times, but were handed down from generation to generation of ascetics and mendicants who belonged to the non-Aryan tradition of the philosophic movement." (*Indian Philosophy from the Ontological Point of View*, Bombay, 1977, p. 132). S. N. Dasgupta, too, shares this view with Joshi concerning Patañjali as the systematiser and not the inventor of the system of Yoga. He writes: "Of the Patañjali school of Sāṃkhya . . . Patañjali was probably the most notable person, for he not only collected different forms of Yoga practices, and gleaned the diverse ideas which were or could be associated with the Yoga, but grafted them in the form in which they have been handed down to us. Vācaspati and Vijñānabhikṣu, the two great commentators on the *Vyāsabhāṣya*, agree with us in holding that Patañjali was not the founder of Yoga, but an editor. Analytic study of the *sūtras* do not show any original attempt, but a masterly and systematic compilation which was also supplemented by fitting contributions." *A History of Indian Philosophy*, reprint, Delhi, 1.229.
2. As far as the metaphysical or conceptual frame of the Yoga system is concerned, it is entirely deirved from the Sāṃkhya school of thought. It differs from the Sāṃkhya with regard to God, in that Yoga accepts the reality of God wheras the Sāṃkhya, being atheistic in orientation, feels no need of God, and so does not postulate its existence.

   The Sāṃkhya is considered to be the oldest philosophical

school of thought. The term *sāṃkhya* is a mathematical term denoting enumeration—and enumeration in every form signifies analysis. And as a method of analysis, Sāṃkhya thereby engages in analysing the real from the unreal. So Sāṃkhya, as a philosophical system of thought, engages in the analytic discernment concerning the Self (*puruṣa*). It is through proper discernment of the Self that the seeker, according to the system of Sāṃkhya, obtains freedom from the painful and limiting factors of embodied existence.

The earliest text of the Sāṃkhya school that is available is the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. The date of composition of the text is not known. However, it is claimed that the text was composed sometime after the fifth century of our era. Many valuable commentaries have been written on this text, but the most important ones are the *Sāṃkhya-tattva-kaumadī* of Vācaspatimiśra and the *Sāṃkhya-pravacanasūtra*. Aniruddha and Vijñānabhikṣu have commented upon the latter commentary.

3. A. Barth, *Hinduism*, reprint, New Delhi, 1980, p. 88.
4. There are many scholars who suspect that the present text of the *Yogasūtra* is not what the original text might have been. So an attempt has been made at reconstructing the original text from the present text that is available. The whole exercise of reconstruction of the original text has been based upon the philosophical analysis of historicism. J.W. Hauer, for example, made an attempt at sub-dividing the text into five sections.

The main theoretical force behind the task of reconstructing the original text of the *Yogasūtra* from the present one has its basis in historical determinism. Hauer quite explicitly states this deterministic historicism when he writes: "The text must therefore belong to a period when Yoga resisted the excessive cultivation of consciousness, a period, therefore, judged by the Indian standrads, given to greatly increased dialcetical and speculative activity which, after all, at several times during the course of Indian history, has been regarded as conducive to salvation." *Der Yoga: Ein indischer Weg zum Selbst*, Stuttgart, 1932, p. 227.

Such scholars as Frauwellner and Oberhammer faithfully follow this line of thought. However, none of them agree as to the elements that were constitutive of the original text of the *Yogasūtra*. Even their interpretation concerning certain yogic terms sometimes is quite misleading. The interpretation of such

terms as *samādhi* and *samāpatti* is so misleading as would lead to the obliteration to the intended meaning of these terms. Thus writes Oberhammer: "The *samādhiḥ* of the Nirodhayoga may possibly be called natural mysticism, while the *samāpattiḥ* represents only a method to appropriate existentially a certain belief or truth being a part of a philosophical or theological system. Thus the *samāpattiḥ* having no real object, but only representation and ideas, i. e., finite contents of cognition, cannot be called a mystical experience. The *samādhiḥ* of the Nirodha-yoga, on the contrary, unlike the *samādhiḥ* of the *saṃyamaḥ*, is a meditation of a completely different structure. In it the cognition transcends all finite objects in the direction of Being, which as *saky-line* of cognition is necessary *a priori* of each act of cognition, reaches this very Being in a sort of direct experience, since every content of the act of cognition is eliminated, in spite of the fact that this Being on principle can never become the explicit object of human cognition." Oberhammer, "Meditation und Mystik in yoga des Patañjali," in: *Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde Sub- und Ostasiesns und Archiv. fur indische Philosophie*, 9, 1965, p. 18.

In inserting existential terminology of Heidegger, Oberhammer thereby does no justice to the intended meaning of the terms. The text of the *Yogasūtra* does not differentiate the enstatic experience of *samādhi* from the one that occurs in *samāpatti*, as in 1.41 the text makes it clear that the *samāpatti* state is arrived at when "the fluctuations (of the mind) have been destroyed (*kṣīṇavṛtteḥ*)." Thus merely by translating a technical term does not mean that we have understood what the text is saying to us. The import of the *Yogasūtra* can be understood only when we make an attempt at understanding as to what Yoga is in itself.

5. See *supra*, n. 2.
6. *Mahābhārata*, 12.300.
7. The Yoga system, unlike the Sāṃkhya, does not deny the existence of God (*Īśvara*). The God of Yoga, however, is not the one who is the creator of the universe, but simply is like a liberated self-monad. The coming into being of the universe is determined by the innate laws of Nature. If any role is assigned to the God of Yoga system, it is in terms of seeing him as having sufficient power of hastening the process of liberation of those who worship him. This help of God must not, however, be equated to the concept of divine grace. This help, rather, has its source in the metaphysical sympathy between the Self and God (cf. *Yogasūtra*, 2.45). It is a sympathy that can be explained in

terms of structural correspondence, in that the only difference between the Self and God is that the latter has never been in bondage, and as such has never experienced any kind of affliction (*kleśa*) (ibid., 1. 24). As the hastener of liberation, God for Patañjali is the Guru of all sages (ibid., 1.26).

8. *Ṛgveda*, 10.72, 90; 129.
9. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2.1.2.
10. *Mahābhārata*, bk. 12.
11. *Yogasūtra*, 2.15.
12. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 2.1.
13. It must be kept in mind that the doctrine of knowledge has to be evaluated in the context of the doctrine of karman. Initially karman represented that aspect of Vedic religion that centered on the performance of sacrifice. The Vedic Aryans believed that the performance of sacrifice enabled the performer to obtain wealth, health, immortality and heaven. It is around this idea of sacrifice that there developed an entire school of exegesis.

    The belief in the efficacy of sacrifice (*karman*) was challenged by the seers of the Upaniṣads. Instead of karman, the Upaniṣads assigned the role of causal efficacy to knowledge (*jñāna*). The aim of the Upaniṣadic knowledge is not the attainment of heaven or that of health and wealth; it is, rather, transmundane. The goal that the Upaniṣadic knowledge desires to reach is that of liberation (*mokṣa*). Thus the Vedic idea of karman is completely rejected in the context of understanding that it does not profit the soul (cf. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.7-10). Rathar karman is interpreted anew, in that it is seen as the main causal force for causing rebirth of an individual existent. It is from rebirth from which the Upaniṣadic knowledge wants to liberate the man-in-bondage, viz., from the bondage that karman gives rise to (*karma-saṃsāra*).
14. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 2.12.
15. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.9.26; cf. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 3.75.
16. *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, 1.46. "The soul," writes Garbe, "is without attributes or qualities, without parts, and therefore imperishable, motionless, absolutely inactive and impassive, unaffected by pleasure and pain or any other emotion, and completely indifferent to all sensation." (*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Eithcs*, 11.190.) The basic difference between the Self and Nature, within the Sāṃkhya system of thought, consists of the following items:

    1. The Self is conscious whereas Nature-in-itself is inert and unconscious.

2. The Self is inactive whereas Nature, when in the process of manifestation, is constantly engaged in forming the new evolutionary cycles.

3. The Self is impersonal whereas the three constituents (*guṇa*) are constitutive of Nature.

4. The Self is a subjective reality whereas Nature is an objective entity.

17. *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, 1.146.
18. See *bhāṣya* of Vyāsa on the *Yogasūtra*, 1.45. Insofar as erroneous association of the Self with Nature persists, it (viz., the Self) "undergoes suffering and passes through a cycle of births and deaths. In order to put an end to this it is necessary for the *puruṣa* to distinguish itself from whatever belongs to *prakṛti*. It is this self-discriminative knowledge (*viveka*) which ultimately liberates the *puruṣa* from the bondage of *prakṛti*." N. V. Joshi, op. cit., p. 17.
19. *Yogasūtra*, 4.22.
20. See Vācaspatimiśra on the *Yogasūtra*, 4.22; cf. also *Yogasūtra*, 2.5.
21. The doctrine of primary constituents (*guṇa*) is the most profound and original contribution of the Sāṃkhya to Indian philosophy. The primary constituents are the fundamental building blocks of the world or of the manifest *prakṛti*. The entire manifestation of Nature occurs due to the combined activity of the primary constituents. When Nature (*prakṛti-pradhāna* or *mūla-prakṛti*) is in its primordial state, the primary constituents are said to be in a perfect harmonious state. Nature initiates the process of cosmogenesis at that moment when the constituents are disturbed. However, both the Sāṃkhya and Yoga fail to answer the question as to how the initial disturbance among the primary constituents is caused. According to the Yoga system, the disturbance is caused by the will of God, whereas the Sāṃkhya believes that it is due to the influence of the bonded self-monads (*puruṣa*).
22. *Yogasūtra*, 4.2-3.
23. The triple mode of functioning of the primary costituents is as follows:

(a) *Sattva* as beingness indicates pure neutrality.

(b) *Rajas* is derived from *raj*, denoting that which is full of glow, and accordingly encapsulates activity.

(c) *Tamas* is derived from the root *tam*. It means to languish, a quality of inertia.

24. P.T. Raju has this to say concerning Matter or Nature and its essence: "*Prakṛti* has three attributes (*guṇa*) . . . clarity (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*)—which remain in equilibrium before the world evolves. There is no consciousness in them. When *ātman* (*puruṣa*) comes in contact with *prakṛti*, and throws its reflection on it, the equilibrium of the three attributes is disturbed, and each begins to dominate the other two. The disturbance starts the process of evolution of the world." In: *The Philosophical Traditions of India*, London, 1971, p. 161.
25. See *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, 1.61 and *Yogasūtra*, 2.19 with regard to the evolution of Nature.
26. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 1.4; cf. *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, 1.115, 118.
27. *Sāṃkhya-pravacanabhāṣya*, 1.20.
28. The intentional consciousness constantly operates within the dialectical frame of subject and object. Whenever and wherever there is duality, there the intentional consciousness is operational. In contrast to intentional consciousness, there is transcendental consciousness, and this consciousness, on account of its purity and lucidity, is free from the dialectical duality of subject-object. Thus are we told "that (transcendent) state (of consciousness), in which all volition (*saṃkalpa*) has ceased completely (and which is) like reef from unconsciousness and sleep—(that is called the state of own-being of consciousness)." *Lagh Yogavasiṣṭha*, 3.18.
29. *Yogasūtra*, 1.41.
30. N.V. Joshi points out that there is contradiction to be found in the explanation of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga concerning the relation of the Self with Matter. He writes: "That the *prakṛti*, which is ex-hypothesis insentient, should be credited with the inherent impulse to lead the conscious *puruṣa* to its liberation passes comprehension. The problem becomes all the more poignant when the Sāṃkhya seeks to explain the process of knowledge. Evidently, unless the *prakṛti*, or to be more precise, the specific evolute of *prakṛti*, namely, the *buddhi*, is somehow brought in contact with *puruṣa*, there is no possibility of knowledge. But such a contact is absolutely impossible.

    "According to Vācaspatimiśra, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* do not come in contact (*saṃyoga*) in space and time, but through 'its proximity to the Spirit, the Spirit is reflected in the will (*buddhi*) when the will assumes the form of the Spirit and thus accomplishes the Spirit's experiencing of all things' (cf. *Tattvakaumudī* on *Kārikā*, 37). Vācaspatimiśra also calls this the specific fitness (*yogayatā*).

Now when we speak of fitness, it is implied that there is a certain sense of harmony working between the *puruṣa* and the *buddhi*. But, as we have seen, they are the exact contradictories to each other. Hence it is nothing short of a mystery to think how knowledge is possible ,"op. cit., p. 113.

31. *Yogasūtra*, 2.4
32. The process of super-imposition of the non-self upon the Self is called *adhyāsa*. Erroneous superimposition of the characteristics of the unreal upon the real (*pratyagātman*) occurs due to ignorance. Śaṃkara, in his *bhāṣya* on the *Vedāntasūtra* (Introduction), explains the process of superimposition in the following words:

"Extra personal attributes are superimposed upon the Self if a man considers himself sound and entire, as long as his wife, children, and so on are sound and entire. Attributes of the body are superimposed upon the Self if a man thinks of himself (viz., his Self) as stout, lean, fair, as standing, walking or jumping. Attributes of the sense organs . . . if he thinks 'I am mute, deaf, one-eyed, or blind.' Attributes of the internal organs (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) . . . if he considers himself (viz., his Self) subject to desire, intention, doubt, determination, and so on. Having superimposed the producer of the notion of the ego (*ahaṃ-pratyāyin*) (viz., the *antaḥkaraṇa*) upon the inner Self. . . one super-imposes the inner Self upon the inner organs, etc. This is the nature of original *adhyāsa*, beginningless and endless (*anādirananta*), having the form of erroneous notion (*mithyā-pratyāyarūpa*), cause of the fact that the individual souls are agents and enjoyers (*kartṛtva-boktṛtvapravartaka*), observed by everyone (*sarvaloka-pratyakṣa*)."

The operation of ignorance or of superimposition has two aspects. It does not operate in a void. It needs a locus (*āśraya*) to operate. Let us take the example of mother-of-pearl for silver. The person who thinks of mother-of-pearl as silver is the locus of ignorance. It is in and through the person that has erroneous cognition that ignorance operates. The object of this false cognition is the mother-of-pearl. The double operation of ignorance thus becomes explicit. It conceals (*āvaraṇa*) the mother-of-pearl by projecting silver in its place. Ignorance thus functions as a projection when it projects the mother-of-pearl as silver. The double operation of ignorance is spoken of as the power of concealment (*āvaraṇa-śakti*) and the power of projection (*vikṣepa-śakti*).

When ignorance is under the influence of *rajas* (passion), it operates at the level of projection. When ignorance conceals the object of perception, it remains under the inertial influence of *tamas*. It is the inertial attribute that makes things appear other than what they are: Cf. *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 110-13.

33. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 7.1.3.
34. *Sāṃkhyasūtra*, 3.22-23.
35. The task of the method of negation is to transcend the erroneous cognition concerning reality. Upon the removal of the false is reached the real. Śaṃkara describes the method of negation thus: "By negating all the adjuncts through the help of the scriptural statement, it is not this, it is not this, realise the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul by means of the great Vedic aphorism." (*Ātmabodha*, 29: *niṣidhya nikhilopādhīn neti-neti-iti vākhyātaḥ, vidyād aikyaṃ mahāvākyair jīvātma-paramāt-manoḥ*. It is a method by the use of which is removed false accretions from the Self by saying, for example, that the Self "is not apprehended by the eye, nor by the other senses, not by penance or good works" (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 3.18). This theme of negation is explained in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.9.26, thus; "The Self is to be described by No, No." Since the real is transcendent, so it, in the words of Śaṃkara, "transcends speech and mind, does not fall within the category of the object." Śaṃkara on the *Vedāntasūtra*, 3.2.22.
36. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.14: "Even as a disc stained by dust shines brilliantly when cleansed, so the embodied (existent), on seeing the reality of the Self, becomes unitary, fulfilled and free from sorrow."
37. *Yogasūtra*, 1.2.
38. There are two specific ways of overcoming the operations of the mind. One of them is the constant practice (*abhyāsa*) of yogic methods and the other is the cultivation of the spirit of renunciation (*vairāgya*). The methods in themselves will be of little help unless practised with an attitude of dispassionate renunciatory detachment. Vyāsa, while commenting on the *Yogasūtra* (1.12), explains these two ways in the following manner:

    "The stream of consciousness (*citta-nāḍī*) flows in both (directions). It flows to the good, and it flows to the bad. The one commencing with discernment and terminating in emancipation (*kaivalya*) flows to the good. The one commencing with the lack of discernment and terminating in conditioned

existence (*saṃsāra*) flows to the bad. Through dispassion (*vairāgya*) the flowing out to the (transient) sense-objects is checked, and through the practice (*abhyāsa*) of the vision of discernment, the stream of discernment is laid. Thus the restriction of the activity of consciousness is dependent on both (viz., on *vairāgya* and *abhyāsa*)."

The *Bhagavadgītā* (6.35) points out the need for both dispassion and practice for the control of mind. It says: "The mind, O strong-armed (Arjuna), is undoubtedly unsteady and difficult to control. Yet practice and dispassion, O son-of-Kunti, it can be seized."

Śaṃkara, in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, v. 374, says that no realisation of the transcendental state of unity of Being is possible apart from the cultivation of dispassion. Accordingly he says: "Dispassion and insight (cultivated through the practice of unification) are like the wings of a bird for the man who (strives for emancipation).... Without the help of both the creeper (called) release, which climbs to the summit of the (world) edifice, cannot be reached."

The term that he *Yogasūtra* makes use for practice is *abhyāsa*. This term is not to be found in the ancient Vedic literature. Instead of *abhyāsa*, the term that is made use is *śrama* (exertion). For the first time the term *abhyāsa* is used in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (1.14) and the *Bhagavadgītā* (6.35, 44; 8.8; 12.9, 10, 12; 18.36). The term is composed of prefix *abhi* (unto) and *as-a* (sitting), viz., "to sit for," or "to apply oneself to." Practice, thus, means repetition. Patañjali points out that "Practice is the (repeated) effort to stabilise (consciousness). However, this (practice) (gains) firm ground (only when it) is cultivated for a long time, uninterruptedly (and with full attention)." (*Yogasūtra*, 1.13-14.) The term *vairāgya* too belongs to the post-Vedic era. The term means what *vitṛṣṇā* (thirstlessness), *tyāga* (abandonment) and *saṃnyāsa* (renunciation) denote. All these terms indicate the turning away from that that is opposite to what they denote.

39. The empirical experiences emerge when the mind projects itself towards that that is outside of it, which, in other words, means the turning of consciousness towards the object out there. This intentional aspect of consciousness is explained in the *Yogasūtra* (1.4) thus: "Otherwise (when the mind is outwardly inclined and receives impressions) it (the Self) assumes the form of the activities or of the mental modes."

40. The characteristic of entasis is that the Self cognises the own-being of itself by itself: "Then there is an abiding of the spectator

(viz., the Self) in its own pristine form." Ibid., 1.3.

41. Ibid., 1.6.
42. Ibid., 1.48, 51.
43. Ibid., 2.3, 4.
44. The cessation of the operations of the mind means that the mind becomes completely empty of those cognitive and conative contents that persist in it. It is the total vacuity of the mind that allows the Self to have its own cognition. "If the mind is emptied and stilled," write T.M.P. Mahadevan, "and there is no more reflection in it, the Spirit will realise its true nature and escape from the snares of primal matter," op. cit., p. 222.
45. *Yogasūtra*, 2.3. If the mind is not checked, there follow, in the words of the *Bhagavadgītā* (2.62-63), terrible consequences. Thus are we warned: "When a man absorbs himself in the sense-object, direct contact (*saṃga*) is born to them. From direct contact springs desire, from desire anger is bred. From anger comes total bewilderment (*sammoha*), from total bewilderment disorder of the memory, from disorder of the memory the destruction of the intellect (*buddhi*). On the destruction of the intellect, man is lost."
46. The ascetical or meditational methods that enable a Yogī to overcome the innumerable operations of the mind constitute what the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (6.10-11) calls Yoga, which is a pre-Patañjali text. In this text we read: "When the five sense organs together with the mind are at rest and the intellect (*buddhi*) stirs not—this, they say, is the supreme course. This they consider as Yoga: the firm holding back of the senses. Then one becomes undistracted. Yoga, truly, is a coming and going."

    This description indicates that the methods of Yoga have to have such an orientation in terms of which the normal or natural functions of the senses and the mind are so reversed as to make them non-functional. It is by practising such yogic methods that are antithetical to the normal way of life that the goal is reached. Since the senses are the cause of much suffering, so it is far better not to allow them to give rise to painful experiences. It is by stilling the senses and the mind that this goal of rest is experienced in terms of the knowledge of the Self. Therefore:

    "The Self cannot be perceived with the senses which, disunited, scatter to and fro and are difficult to restrain for those whose self is not prepared" *Mahābhārata*, 12.194.58.

    "Changing thereto (viz., to the Supreme Reality), the sage should, through absorption, concentrate his mind to one point by clenching (*piṇḍīkṛtvā*) the host of senses and sitting like a log."

"He should not perceive the sound with his ear, not feel touch with his skin. He should not perceive form with his eyes and not taste with his tongue."

"Also, the knower of Yoga should, through absorption, abstain from all smells. He should courageously reject these agitations of the group of five (senses)." Ibid., 12.195.5-7.

47. A Yogī who succeeds in making the senses, as it were, lifeless like a log, and thereby calms the mind from the rise and fall of whirls, reaches a stage when "he does not hear, nor smell, nor taste, nor see, nor does he sense touch, and his mind no longer conceptualises (*saṃkalpayata*)." Ibid., 12.306.16.

48. There are, according to the Yoga system, nine types of obstacles that the practitioner of Yoga has to overcome before even thinking of the soteric goal. These obstacles are the cause of perturbance in the mind. The obstacles are sickness, sloth, doubt, heedlessness, dissipation, wrong views, inability to progress in meditation, and the inability to remain in the state of enstasis (cf. *Yogasūtra*, 1.30). The obstacles become the cause of such experiences as, for example, pain, ennui, trembling of the body, and faulty breathing (ibid., 1.31). If the practitioner does not succeed in overcoming these obstactes, he remains far away from the yogic goal of mental absorption and of peace. The net-result, in the words of Śaṃkara, is the following:

"When consciousness even slightly deviates from the goal and is directed outwards, then it sinks, just as an accidentally dropped ball rolls down a flight of stairs," *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, v. 325.

49. The secret teachings of the Yoga system are imparted in secrecy by a teacher to his disciple—and this tradition has continued to this day. The importance of the *guru*, with the passage of time, gained such significance as to usurp the role of God in the life of a disciple. This supernatural aspect of *guru* becomes explicit when we, for example, read that "the knowledge that comes from the mouth of a teacher (*guru*) is alive. Other kinds (of knowledge) are barren, powerless and the cause of suffering" (*Śiva-saṃhitā*, 3.1). It is within this framework of understanding that *guru* is extolled and praised like a deity. And so it is *guru* alone that has the power of leading his disciple to the soteric goal of salvation. They who, thus, desire to know the Self "should approach, fuel in hand, a teacher who is well-versed (in the scriptural lore) and established in the Absolute. And to that (seeker) who approaches (him), and is even-minded and peaceful, (the

teacher) imparts truthfully the knowledge of the Absolute so that he (the seeker) may realise the imperishable, the true Self." *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.

As it is said that the *guru* alone is able to remove the spiritual darkness of ignorance, he is, thus, adored and worshipped. They who show disrespect to the teacher are cursed thus:

"May he who deserts his teacher meet his death; may he who discontinues (the repeating of) the mantra become poverty-stricken; may he who deserts both, and be he even perfected one, be cast into hell." *Saura-purāṇa*, 68, 11.

50. It is not an easy task to become a disciple of a qualified teacher. If a teacher, after certain tests, feels that the candidate is fit to be his disciple, only then would the candidate become, through the process of initiation (*dīkṣā-saṃskāra*), a disciple (cf. *Kulārṇava-tantra*, 14.19). Initiation not only is a symbolic act of rebirth, but also is an act through which the *guru* incorporates the disciple into himself. The *Atharvaveda* (11.5.3) speaks of initiation in these words: "Initiation takes place in that the teacher carries the pupil in himself, as it were, as the mother (bears) the embryo in her body. After the three days of the ceremony, the disciple is born."

51. *Yogasūtra*, 1.12. The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* (1.15-16) speaks at length as to what is conducive and what is not conducive for a Yogī. Such a Yogī will not succeed in the practice of Yoga who over-eats, makes forceful exertion, talks much, disregards rules of discipline, or is fickle of mind, and seeks the company of others. A successful Yogī is one who is "full of zeal, courage, (and is) steady, wise, full of determination, and who renounces the company of the uninitiated."

52. It is believed that a Yogī who efficaciously makes use of the methods of Yoga will be blessed with occult powers (*siddhi*). A Yogī who has gained access to occult powers is called an Accomplished One (*siddha*). The occult powers that a *siddha* Yogī is supposed to possess are such as would enable him to know the past and the future, previous lives of all beings, the power of reading the mind of others, of becoming as small in size as a mustard seed, or as big as a mountain, etc. (cf. *Yogasūtra*, 3.17, 19, 21, 25, 27, 29). The following are the eight powers that a real *siddha* Yogī is supposed to have, and they are:

Aṇiman—the power of making oneself as small in size as an atom.

Laghiman—the power of levitation.

Mahiman—the power of making oneself as big in size as a mountain.

Prāpti—the power of going at will anywhere.
Prākāmya—the power of becoming completely free from mental and physical constraints.
Vaśitvā—the power of bringing under control the operations of Nature.
Īśtṛtvā—the power of creating anything.
Kāmāvaśayitvā—the power of satisfying one's desires (*Yogasūtra*, 3.45).

53. The power of travelling in space seems to have its source in the shamanistic ascension to heaven.
54. *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 4.9-11; *Yogasūtra*, 1.7, 11.
55. *Yogasūtra*, 1.13.
56. Ibid., 1.5.
57. Ibid., 1.16.
58. The difference between the embodied and the liberated Self lies in the fact that the ignorant existent thinks of the former as being confined within the cage of Matter, which essentially it is not. This very process of associating the Self, which by nature is detached, with Matter is called superimposition (*adhyāsa*). The entire process of superimposing, upon gaining the knowledge of the transcendent Self, truns out to be illusory. Insofar as this process of superimposition continues, the Self will be considered as being in bondage, whereas in fact it never has been in bondage. "The Self," writes Gauḍapāda, "can neither be born nor destroyed, is neither bound nor active, neither thirsts for freedom nor is liberated." *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, 2.32. This reasoning tells us that for the ignorant the Self, on account of its imaginary association with Matter, is in bondage, whereas for the man of gnosis it is not. This is the main difference between the embodied Self and the non-embodied Self.
59. Cf. *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, 18.
60. The actions of the liberated saint stem from an attitude that is rooted in an internal renunciation. An action that has its basis in dispassion is neutral, and so does not terminate in a corresponding result, whereas a motivated action, having its source in self-interest, is not neutral and so gives rise to an appropriate fruit. The *Bhagavadgītā* (3.4, 19) offers the following analysis of self-motivated and non-motivated action:

    Not by abstention from actions does a man enjoy actionlessness (*naiṣkarmya*) nor by renunciation does he approach perfection.
    Therefore always perform unattached deed (*kārya*), for the man

who performs actions without attachment obtains the Supreme. What is action and what is inaction? Herein even sages are bewildered. I shall declare you that action which, once understood, will set you free from ill (*aśubha*). Indeed, one ought to understand (the nature) of action and one ought to understand wrong action, and one ought to understand inaction. Impenetrable is the way of action. He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, is wise among men, yoked and performing whole actions (*kṛtsna-karman*). He whose enterprise is free from desire and motive, and whose action is burned in the fire of wisdom—him wise call learned (*paṇḍita*). Having cast off (all) attachment to the fruit of actions, ever content, independent, though engaged in actions, he does not act at all. Hoping-for-nothing, self and thought restrained, abandoning all possessions, performing action only with the body—he does not accumulate guilt (*kilbiṣa*).

61. Dispassion is born when is realised that the sense-based pleasures "are never enjoyed, but ourselves are enjoyed. Asceticism is never kindled, but we ourselves are burnt up. Time does not pass, but we pass. Our thirsts are never quenched, but we ourselves are consumed." (*Vairāgya-śataka*, v. 7.) "In enjoyment lies fear of disease; in social status (*kula*) the fear of loss; in wealth the fear of the king; in honour the fear of humiliation; in strength the fear of the opponent; in beauty the fear of old age; in erudition the fear of disputant; in virtue the fear of the seducer; in body the fear of death. All things of this world pertaining to man, are attended with fear. Renunciation alone grants man fearlessness." Ibid., v. 31.
62. *Mahābhārata*, 12.300.50.
63. *Bhagavadgītā*, 5.27.
64. While making use of metaphors and images, Vyāsa (*Yogabhāṣya*, 2.54 and see also 3.1; cf. *Tattvavaiśāradī*, 3.1) explains the process of concentration thus:

    "As when the queen-bee flies up and bees swarm after her and when she settles down, (the bees also) settle, so the senses are controlled when consciousness (*citta*) is controlled."
65. Patañjali (*Yogasūtra*, 3.2) has defined concentration as "the continuity of awareness (*pratyaya*) in (the state of) con-centration."
66. Cf. *Mahābhārata*, 3.312.58. It is very difficult to achieve full concentration. It is the persistent practice alone that terminates in absorptive concentration. Recognising it, the *Mahābhārata*

(12.300.54-55) has this to say in this regard:

"It is possible to stand on the sharpened edge of the knife, but it is difficult for an unprepared person to stand in the concentration of Yoga. Miscarried concentration, O friend, does not lead to an auspicious goal, (but is) like a vessel at sea without a captain."

67. *Yogasūtra*, 2.29.
68. Ibid.
69. See *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad.*
70. *Yogasūtra*, 2.33.
71. In later yogic literature five more ethical rules of self-restraint were added, and they are *dayā* (compassion), *ārjava* (uprightness), *kṣamā* (forgiveness), *dhṛti* (steadfastness), and *mitāhāra* (temperance). Cf. *Yogasūtra*, 2.30.
72. In the early Vedic literature the virtue of *ahiṃsā* is given only a relative importance. The Vedas permit the slaughtering of animals for the purpose of sacrifice. It is the non-Vedic schools of religious thought, like Jainism and Buddhism, that seem to have brought to the fore the virtue of non-injury. The need of the virtue of non-injury as a mode of asceticism has to be seen in the context of salvific liberation. Apart from the cultivation of this virtue, the goal of salvation cannot be reached. It is in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (5.2.8.7) where, for the first time, the term *ahiṃsā* is made use of as a noun. (See also *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 6.3.126.) As far as moral aspect of the term is concerned, it is well explained in the *Kapiṣṭhālakaṭha-saṃhitā* (31.11). The *Chāndogyopaniṣad* explicitly tells us that the virtue of non-injury has to be cultivated in relation to all sentient beings. The attitude of non-harming as one of the greatest virtues is well stated in the *Bhagavadgītā* and in the various Purāṇas. See for further details, *Mahābhārata*, 9.30.
73. See Vyāsa on the *Yogasūtra*, 2. 31. While commenting on *sūtra* 2.30 of the *Yogasūtra*, Vyāsa explains the significance of the restraints thus: "Non-injury means not to cause pain to any creature by any means or at any time. . . . Truthfulness consists in according one's speech and thought with one's acts. . . . Stealing is illegally appropriating things that belong to another. Abstention from stealing consists in destroying the desire to steal. Chastity is restraining the secret (of the generative forces). Absence of avarice is the non-appropriation of things that do not belong to oneself, and it is a consequence of one's comprehension of the sin that consists in being attached to possessions, and of the harm produced by the accumulation,

preservation or destruction of possessions." *Yogabhāṣya*, 2.30.
74. *Yogasūtra*, 2.31.
75. V.V.S. Aiyar, ed., *Tirukural*, Tiruchirapalli, 1952, v. 321.
76. *Yogasūtra*, 2.35.
77. Ibid., 2.36.
78. *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*, 4.75-77.
79. *Yogasūtra*, 2.36-37.
80. *Darśana Upaniṣad*, 1.13-14.
81. *Yogasūtra*, 2.38. Vyāsa, while commenting on the *Yogasūtra* (2.38), writes: "Through the attainment of this (vitality), (the Yogī) increases his unobstructed abilities, and (he be an adept), becomes competent to transfer his knowledge to his disciples."
82. *Yogasūtra*, 2. 32. Cleanliness means the purification of the bodily organs. It consists of in eliminating the residual ailments from the body. The process of purification is performed through the methods of purgation. Contentment means that there is a total absence of desire for the possession of worldly objects. "Asceticism consists in bearing the pairs of opposites, as, for example, the desire to eat and the desire to drink; heat and cold; the desire to remain standing and the desire to remain seated; the absence of words and the absence of gestures that could reveal one's thoughts and feelings. Study is the knowledge of the sciences that relate to deliverance from existence, or repetition of the syllable *Oṃ*; etc." Vyāsa, *Yogabhāṣya*, 2.32.
83. *Yogasūtra*, 2.33.
84. Ibid., 2.40.
85. Ibid., 2.41-42.
86. *Mahābhārata*, 3.199.82.
87. *Yogasūtra*, 2.41.
88. Ibid., 3.35.
89. *Manusmṛti*, 5.109.
90. *Ātmabodha*, v. 6; *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (6.34) has classified the mind into two types: Pure and Impure. "It (the mind) is impure from contact with desires; pure when freed from desire. When one has freed the mind from slothfulness and heedlessness and made it immovable and then attains to the mindless (state), this is the Supreme State. The mind should be restrained within until such time as it becomes dissolved. This is gnosis and salvation; all else is but book knowledge. He whose mind has become pure through absorption and entered the Self, experiences a bliss impossible to describe in words and only intelligible to the inner instrument."

91. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6.29.
92. Ibid., 17.14-19.
93. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 6.6.2-3.
94. *Yogabhāṣya*, 1.23.
95. *Yogasūtra*, 2.46.
96. *Yogabhāṣya*, 2.46.
97. *Yogasūtra*, 2.48.
98. M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, pp. 54-55.
99. *Yogasūtra*, 2.46, 48.
100. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 6. 2.4; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.11.3.
101. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6.11-14.
102. *Yogavasiṣṭha*, 3.13.31.
103. *Bṛhadhāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2.13. 6.
104. *Yogaśikhā Upaniṣad*, vv. 59-60.
105. *Yogasūtra*, 2.49.
106. S.N. Dasgupta has described as to how the internal and external condition of immobility is achieved through the practice of breath-control by observing that "the breath that is taken in is kept for a minute and then (is) slowly exhaled. The practice is continued for days and months, the period of the retention of the breath taken is being gradually increased. With the growth of breath-control, one may keep his breath suspended, without exhalation or inhalation, for hours, days, months and even years together. With the suspension of the respiratory process the body remains in a state of suspended animation, without any external sign of life. The heart ceases to beat, (and) there is neither taking in of food nor evacuation of any sort, there is no movement of the body.... Even in modern times there are many well-attested cases of Yogīs who can remain in this apparently lifeless condition for more than a month. I have myself seen a case where the Yogin stayed in this condition for nine days." *Hindu Mysticism*, Chicago, 1927, p. 75.
107. *Rājamārtaṇḍa*, 1.34.
108. The defects that are psychic in nature are five in number, and they are passion (*rāga*), delusion (*moha*), attachment (*sneha*), desire (*kāma*), and wrath (*krodha*).
109. *Yogasūtra*, 2.50-51.
110. Ibid., 2.52.
111. Ibid., 2.54.
112. *Mahābhārata*, 12.49.3.
113. *Bhagavadgītā*, 2.62-63.
114. Ibid., 5.27-28.
115. *Yogasūtra*, 2.54-55.

116. Pratima Bowes, *The Hindu Religious Tradition*, London, 1977, p. 193.
117. *Yogabhāṣya*, 2, 45.
118. *Yogasūtra*, 3.1.
119. *Mahābhārata*, 12.306.16.
120. *Yogabhāṣya*, 3.1.
121. *Yogasūtra*, 3.2.
122. *Yogabhāṣya*, 3.2.
123. In the *Sāṃkhya-pravacanasūtra* (6.25) *dhyāna* is explained as that form of concentration in which the mind is without an object (*dhyānaṃ nirviṣyam manas*).
124. *Yogasūtra*, 1.5-11.
125. Ibid., 2.11.
126. *Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad*, v. 7.
127. *Yogasūtra*, 3.3.
128. Pratima Bowes explains the state of enstasis thus: "When meditation comes to a state wherein one is not even aware of meditation and all distinctions that are normally obtained between act and object completely disappear, then one enters *samādhi*." And the *Yogasūtra* (3.3) speaks of enstasis in these terms: "The same *dhyāna*, shining as object alone as if devoid of its own nature (wherein thinker and thought, the name and idea, disappear from the mind) is *samādhi*."
129. *Yogasūtra*, 3.3. The *Laghu Yogavasiṣṭha* (3.118) explains *samādhi* as that state "in which all volition (*saṃkalpa*) has ceased completely."
130. *Pañcadaśī*, 1.55.
131. *Yogasūtra*, 1.41: "Born in consequence of merely non-occupation (when the outside happening leave the mind untouched), (the mind becomes) like a crystal *grahitri* (observer), *grahan* (the organ of perception), or the *grāhya* (objects of perception), appearing in the shape of what is presented to it, is (known) as *samāpatti* (assuming as original form, and this is a stage of the dissolution of the mind)."
132. Ganganatha Jha, ed., *Yogasāra-saṃgraha*, sec. ed., Madras, 1934, p. 4: "During this stasis there is no other trace of the mind save the impressions (*saṃskāra*) left behind (by its past functioning). If these impressions were not present, there would be no possibility of returning to consciousness."
133. *Yogasūtra*, 1.42-44. The stages of determinate enstasis are also classified as that of *vitraka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda*, and *asmitā*. Ibid., 1.17.
134. *Yogasāra-saṃgraha* of Vijñānabhikṣu, chap. 1.
135. *Yogasūtra*, 1.43. Vyāsa comments on this *sūtra* thus: "*Citta* (mind)

becomes non-analytical (*nirvitarka*) after the memory ceases to function, viz., after verbal or logical associations cease; at the moment when the object is empty of name and meaning, when thought is reflected in a direct manner by espousing the form of the object and glows only with that object in itself (*svarūpa*)." In this state the personal "I," as the knower of objects and the doer of deeds, disappears. It is abstract thought that alone remains.

136. Ibid., 1.44-45.
137. Ibid., 1.48.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid., 1.5.1.
140. Ibid., 3.50.
141. Ibid., 1.48.
142. It is a state in which, in the words of the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* (64) nothing remains in consciousnes:

    "Neither I am, nor is ought to mine, nor do I exist." Consequently there is "no consciousness of body, senses or mind," in: R.S. Mishra, *Fundamentals of Yoga*, London, 1972, p. 217. Shyam Sunder Goswami, in his *Jesus Christ and Yoga* (London, 1968, p. 17), says that with the abolition of mind "the knowledge of the world disppears entirely, and even the feeling of I-nees is completely lost."
143. *Yogasāra-saṃgraha*, p. 5.
144. *Yogasūtra*, 1.18.
145. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 6.3.10-20.
146. *Vedānta Paribhāṣa*, chap. 7.
147. *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, 1. 7.
148. *Yogasūtra*, 1.18.
149. *Yogabhāṣya*, 1.18.
150. *Yogasūtra*, 4.34.
151. *Pañcadaśī*, 3.22.

Part II

THE PATH OF TANTRA

4

The Early Historical Roots of Tantricism

TANTRIC LITERATURE, whether Hindu or Buddhist, is silent concerning the historical origins of Tantricism as a specific antinomian or subversive religious movement within the broad framework of Indian religiosity and spirituality. Whatever account the Tantric texts, both Hindu and Buddhist, have furnished about the historical evolution of Tantricism, it is, for most of the time, either ambiguous or mythic—and whatever hazy or unclear account we may find, it always operates within the realm of mythic consciousness. As mythic consciousness operates in non-time, so it becomes easy for the Tāntrika authors to speak of Tantricism as belonging to the supernatural realm. This is so because the Tāntrika authors are not, from the perspective of their belief system, dealing with the historical materials or with materials which, in their eyes, is of hsitorical importance. They are mainly concerning themselves with a subject matter that is, from the religious perspective, of the nature of the sacred, and thereby transcends that which belongs to history. That which is of the nature of holy is always thought of in terms of transcendence. And transcendence implies "revelation"—a revelation that cannot be said to belong to history, to space-time continuum. History is finite, and therefore perishable, whereas revelation is transcendent, and so eternal and indivisible.

As Tantric texts are believed to be the repositories of transcendent revelation, their origin is said to be of non-human nature.[1] It is, therefore, difficult to find out from the Tantric

texts as to when a particular Tantric text was composed. Tantras, as revelation, are recognised as scriptural authority concerning matters pertaining to Tantric ideology and praxis.[2] Even though it may be difficult to locate or indicate the specific period of composition of most of the Tantric texts, it is, however, certain that Tantric religiosity or spirituality, when compared with the Vedic one, is not very old, although its roots may go back to prehistory.[3] We must, in this context, make a distinction between "Tantric elements" and "Tantricism" as a full-fledged religious movement.[4] There are very many Tantric elements whose roots either go back to the prehistorical period of the Indus Civilisation or may be located in the Vedic texts. But Tantricism as a specific and singular religious movement is not older than AD 300.

Before we proceed further in our investigation with regard to the earliest Tantric elements, it is necessary to keep in mind that quite a number of scholars are of the opinion that Tantricism is not of Indian origin. This thesis is based upon the assumption that says that the heart or essence of Tantricism consists in the worship of the Mother Goddess.[5] The scholars who are of this view believe that the worship of the Goddess (*devī, śakti*), being non-Vedic in orientation, does not belong to the Indian ethos, and so must have come from outside India. H.P. Shastri, in this context, believes that the "Tantras come from outside India. Most probably it came with the Magi priests of the Scythians."[6] Bhattacharya, too, is of the opinion that the introduction of "Śakti-worship in religion is so un-Indian that we are constrained to admit it as an external or foreign influence."[7]

The above theory concerning Tantricism as having come from outside India is given further push by pointing out that in some of the Tantras it is specifically mentioned that certain left-hand practices were learnt by the Indians outside India.[8] The theory is based on a legend which says that sage Vasiṣṭha, upon visiting Mangolia (*mahācīna*), got to know certain secret left-hand (*cīnācāra*) practices. This story is told in one of the Tantric texts, namely, the *Rudrayāmala*.[9] In this text we are told that Vasiṣṭha performed penitential austerities for six thousand years in honour of the Goddess. Even upon

practising austerities, the Goddess did not manifest herself to him. Seeing failure around, Vasiṣṭha approached his father, Brahmā, for such a mantra that would be efficacious and would result in the appearance of the Goddess. Instead of imparting a different mantra, Brahmā advised Vasiṣṭha to continue the practise of austerities—and Vasiṣṭha complied with this advice. However, this time also the Goddess did not manifest herself to the sage. This made the sage angry. The Goddess made herself available to him and advised him to go to Mangolia (*mahācīna*). Following the instructions of the Goddess, Vasiṣṭha visited Mangolia where he learnt the secret left-hand practices. By following the left-hand path, the sage attained the state of liberation. This story is repeated in the *Brahmayāmala*.[10]

The above mythic story does not conclusively prove that Tantricism *per se* is not of Indian origin. What is probable, while keeping the content of the story in mind, is that there might have been certain such non-Indian influences that must have accelerated the development of the cult of the Goddess—and the cult might have derived much of its sustenance from countries that lie on the north-east and north-west of India.[11] However, we shall discuss this problem at an appropriate place in terms of finding out as to whether Tantricism is mainly constituted by the worship of the Goddess or whether the cult of the Goddess is of un-Indian origin.

The Prehistory of Tantricism

In order to locate the historical roots of Tantricism, we will have to analyse such Tantric elements that, at least on the surface level, seem to have had their origin in prehistorical beliefs and cults. The prehistoric elements that have become, over the passage of time, constitutive of Tantricism may not give direct and explicit evidence about specific Tantric practices. They do, however, give certain suggestions, if seen from a religio-cultic viewpoint, concerning the symbolic value of such Tantric practices that we know at present.

The most important Tantric element, which has a prehistory, is the cult of the Mother Goddess. The prehistory of the Goddess lies in the conception of the ancients concerning the

Earth as being the Mother Earth (*Terra Mater*).[12] The conception that the Tāntrikas have of the Goddess seems to have directly evolved out of the primeval Earth cult. The Earth as Mother is the most primeval religious institution. It is an institution characterised by such a consciousness in terms of which the prehistorical man looked at "the earth as the cosmic repository of all forms, latencies and powers . . . the fertile source of being."[13] This institution, in the beginning, may have expressed itself in terms of amorphous or loose consciousness, viz., without any concrete form or symbol. With the passage of time, this vague consciousness of the Earth as being the Mother took on an anthropomorphic form, and expressed itself in the concept of womanhood. As woman is seen the source of life, so is the Mother Earth. This homologisation of the Earth with womanhood is the most appropriate, spontaneous and natural way of looking at the transcendent reality as the source of life.

Once the Earth was bestowed with the identity of womanhood, and thereby the centre and source of life, it became easy to personify it as the Goddess. Accordingly the cult of the Goddess not only became a cultural reality, but also formed the basis of religious institution and experience, and thereby opened up, in the midst of life and death, a new spiritual vision before the ancients. Having been transformed into a religious reality, the Earth as the Mother Goddess has continued to function as the ultimate symbol of life and death. In the context of India, the Goddess has expressed herself through a multitude of cultic symbols. Having evolved out of the Earth, the Goddess has continued her association with the symbols of Nature, viz., of the Earth. Being closely associated with Nature, the Goddess is referred to as the Lady of the Forests, the Daughter of the Himālayas, etc. These attributes or epithets of the Goddess express her deep link with vegetation.[14]

The Earth as Mother is so inclusive that it includes into itself everything that is related to vegetation, which means that such aspects of vegetation are included into the womb of the Mother Earth as plants, trees, grass, etc.[15] It is the tree that forms the connecting link with water and vegetative

symbols. The importance of the tree as a religious symbol is quite manifest from the Vedic times onwards.[16] The tree, as a religious symbol, expresses its sacred character through its identification with the invisible supermundane presence. In other words, it is believed that such supernatural forces that are invisible always inhabit a tree. Because of the presence of the forces of the divine order, the tree is considered as an object of sacrality. Being sacred, the tree becomes the symbol of health, wealth, wellbeing, and fertility, etc. As an anthropomorphised symbol, the tree through propitiation and invocation grants the wishes to both men and woman. The association of the Goddess with the tree signifies that "the tree is an inexhaustible source of cosmic fertility."[17]

The consciousness of the Goddess seems to have arisen from a kind of religious intuition in which the Earth is seen as the source of life. As the source of life, the Earth as the Mother has been deified and divinised. It is this very idea that is one of the main doctrinal pillars of the Tantric conception of the Goddess as a dynamic and creative power. As woman, the Goddess expresses as well as symbolises this religious reality. It is interesting to note that in one of the most important texts (devoted to the Goddess), namely, the *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* the Goddess is referred to as Devī Earth. She is implored with the following petition:

> O, thou! The storehouse of all grains, enriched with all sorts of corns, thou bestowest harvest to all; thou takest away all the grain in this world and again thou producest all corn of various kinds here. O Earth! Thou art all-in-all to the landlords, the best source of refuge and happiness. O bestower of land! Give me your lands.[18]

The prehistoric concept of Earth as Mother does not diminish, even in her Tantric form, her agrarian functions. Whatever shape and form the Goddess may take, she always remains associated with her prehistoric ethos:

> ... the Earth Mother never entirely lost primitive prerogatives of being the mistress of the place, source of all living forms, keeper of children, and womb where the dead were laid to rest, where they were reborn to return eventually to life, thanks to the holiness of Mother Earth.[19]

The Indus Valley Civilisation

It is difficult to say as to whether the archaeological findings of the Indus can be used as the source material for the origin of Tantricism. Whatever doubts we may entertain in this regard, it is of utmost importance to study the archaeological findings of the Indus so that some idea can be formed as to what kind of religion prevailed among the people of the Indus. Definite clues about the existence of the Mother Goddess may be located in the archaeological discoveries of the Indus.[20] The discovery of some of the seals by Marshall and others have led to the conclusion that the cult of the Father God as well as of the Mother Goddess existed, in one form or the other, during the period of the Indus Civilisation. The findings of some of the figurines in the Indus have a close religio-symbolic resemblance with the Tantric deities, particularly with such deities as Śiva and Śakti.[21] Both these deities, although in different nomenclatures, play a very singificant role in both the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism in terms of metaphysical conceptual polarity of male and female. The iconic as well as religio-symbolic resemblance with the Tantric deities have led the scholars to believe that some of the post-Vedic cults and ritual practices have their roots in the religion of the Indus. In other words, it is believed that some of the practices that we find in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism have their origin in the religion of the Indus.[22] There are some scholars who, however, caution us against the tendency of tracing the genetic relationship between the Indus figurines and the post-Vedic cultic deities and practices of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism. Wheeler, in this context, informs us that

> there has been perhaps an exaggerated tendency to regard these (that is, the Indus figurines) as a manifestation of the Great Mother Goddess familiar in the religion of western Asia and parts of Europe.[23]

Whatever be the facts, one thing however is certain, and that is that these figurines, being suggestive in their symbolic meaning and representation, are open to the possibility of reflecting and manifesting a religious experience akin to the one that Tantricism represents. The religious orientation of

the seals demonstrates the possibility of the cult of the Goddess as well as of the male God. Both these iconic representations,[24] as religious symbols, are very suggestive towards a Tantric interpretation.

Let us take into consideration the example of the Mother Goddess. The archaeologists have discovered many pottery images of the Goddess. These images, according to Mackay, "were kept in every house in the ancient Indus cities."[25] The discoveries of the ringstones have established the existence of the cult of the Goddess. The ringstones, as it were, symbolise the womb, and thereby the Goddess. As the womb is the source of life, so is the Goddess of the entire universe. Also it is of interest to note that the nude female figures denote the association of the Mother Earth with such symbols of Nature as, for example, plants, vegetables, etc. In Harappa a nude female figure on terracotta sealing has been found. The legs of this figure are wide open, and a plant comes out of her womb. The figure clearly indicates the symbolic suggestiveness of the cult of vegetation. In other words, the Goddess is seen as the source of life, of food, of sustenance, etc. The symbolic suggestiveness of the Goddess is confirmed by another figure found in Bhita.[26] The legs of the figure, too, are wide open, and there is a lotus plant coming out of her. Banerjea seems to be right in suggesting that the figure indicates the vegetative aspect (*śākambharī*) of the Goddess. In the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkeṇḍya Purāṇa* the relationship of the Goddess with vegetation is confirmed when we are told that the Goddess, in times of drought, feeds people with vegetables grown on her body.[27]

A large number of female generative organs (*yoni*) have been found. Their existence clearly suggests that some kind of fertility cult must have existed among the people of the Indus. In Tantricism *yoni* is the symbol of the creative power of the Goddess, viz., Goddess as creatrix. The Tantric Goddess as Śakti seems to have its prehistory in the Indus.

The other aspect of the Tantric ideology is constituted by the cult of the male God, namely, Śiva. The first trace of the existence of male God may be located in the environs of the Indus. This male God, while in a yogic posture, is surrounded

by animals. For this reason the deity has been labelled as the prototypic Śiva.[28] The deity has three visible faces, with two side horns on the headdress.[29] The yogic posture of the deity supports the interpretation that sees the antecedents of Śiva as the Great Yogī (*mahāyogī*)[30] in this figure.

The discovery of phallus (*liṅga*), the symbol of male generative organ, seems to confirm the belief that the Tantric ideology goes far back into prehistory. The typical figures of phallus have been discovered at Mughal Ghundai[31] in Baluchistan as well as in Harappa.[32] Similar phallic representations, though not of full size, have been discovered at other sites of the Indus. One of the phallic representations has been found in the midst of a vulva (*yoni*) having a footstool (*pīṭha*) as its support.

It is fascinating to note that the cult of the Goddess finds its close affinity with the proto-Śiva of the Indus. The close association of the phallus and vulva foreshadows the Tantric theology of Śiva and Śakti, of Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism of Spirit (*puruṣa*) and Matter (*prakṛti*). The Mother Goddess—the principle of fecundation—will transform herself, in Tantricism, as a reality par excellence. She will invade the sacred sanctuaries of Hinduism and Buddhism in the form of Kālī, Durgā, Tārā, etc., and, in philosophical parlance, will be considered responsible for the existence of the world in the form of creative power (*māyā, śakti*). By peeling off everything, the Goddess in her nakedness[33] absorbs everything into her womb in the same way as she emits everything out of her womb.

The close affiliation of the male and female principles, in the form phallus and vulva, symbolise and concretise the unification of the opposites. On the phenomenal level, the male and female principles represent two polarities which, on the transcendental level, have to be unified into a comprehensive singleness or unity. The Goddess is the symbol of dynamic power. She represents the phenomenalisation of the Absolute, whereas the male principle expresses transcendence. The Goddess is the revelation of that creative mystery which a woman symbolises. The Goddess represents that experience of humanity whereby the power of sexuality is experienced

as the centre and source of life. It is an experience in which the gods seem to have "returned their energies to the Primeval Śakti, the One Force, the fountainhead, whence originally all had stemmed."[34] The result of this experience is the discovery of the original state of the universal power as life and death.

The Indus Valley religious orientation seems to confirm such religio-cultural symbols that form part and parcel of Tantric ideology. In the figurines of the Indus Tantric symbols are quite visible. In Tantric ideology the symbols of phallus-vulva, water, etc., are represented in a developed form. It is therefore safe to guess that some of the Tantric elements may have their historical source in the religio-cultural history of the Indus.

The Vedic Tradition

The Vedic tradition, as documented in the text of the *Ṛgveda*,[35] reflects the religio-cultural scenario of the Aryans upon settling in the Gangetic plains of India. The Aryan religious orientation was mainly constituted by a serious concern for the wellbeing "in this world and in the other world; consequently it is a decisively practical affair."[36] The Vedic thinking is not so much concerned with the theoretical aspects of religion as much as with the practical aspects of life in the world. Leading a pastoral life, the concern of the Vedic Aryans was with the problems of daily life. This concern for practicalities of life reflects itself with regard to the possession of cattle, health and wealth. It is because of this reason for cattle that the cow (*go*) is considered as the most precious possession among all the possessions:

> Again and again in the songs and invocations to the gods the prayer for cattle and horse occurs. Also the strife amongst hostile aboriginal inhabitants turns on the possession of cattle. Therefore, too, the old word for 'war'or 'battle' is originally a desire for cattle (*gaviṣṭā*). In the most extravagant expressions, cows and bullocks are praised as the most precious possessions.[37]

As the Vedic Aryans were practical in the affairs of life, so they were also practical insofar as religious life was concerned. This concern for practicality found its best expression, at the level of religiosity, in and through the ritualised offerings into

the blazing flames of fire of sacrifice. The Vedic sacrifice-oriented rituals functioned as a medium for appropriating the realities for which the sacrifice was performed.[38] Through appropriation and assimilation the sacrifice was expected to yield the desired result, and thereby enable the performer of the sacrifice to surmount the obstacles or difficulties that Nature may have given rise to.[39] This process of appropriation was made possible through the use of the sacred syllables (*mantra*), as these syllables were not merely considered as magical formulae, but as containers and receptors of divine powers. The sacrifice also functioned as a meeting-place between history and non-history, between divine and non-divine, between heaven and earth, and thereby the polarities as opposites, on the transcendental level, were subsumed in the totality of unity.[40] The sacrifice, therefore, functioned both on the phenomenal and transcendental levels. This two-pronged function of the sacrifice made the welfare of this world as well as of the next a possibility.

When it comes to the Tantric form of ritual, the case is not much different from the Vedic one. The Tantric ritual functions exactly in the same manner as the Vedic one. The aim of a Tantric ritual is to experience, through the process of homologisation, the transcendental reality in a concrete form. The Tantric ritual also concerns itself with the world of history, viz., it tries to realise the fruit or result for which the ritual has been performed. As far as the esoteric or symbolic nature of ritual is concerned, it is not different from the Vedic one. The function of the esoteric symbols in a ritual is intended to perform the role of homologisation. This is how, for example, the Vedic sacrifice is homologised with the different parts of the horse:

> The head is the chariot of Soma; the mouth, the *āhāvanya* fire; the feet, the crown of the head . . . the belly, the cart-shed; the feet, the two fires; the sacrificial implements, corresponding limbs. . . .[41]

Whatever be the form of a ritual in post-Vedic Hinduism, whether Tantric or otherwise, it is always related, in one way or the other, to the cult of the Vedic sacrifice. Insofar as Tantric

rituals are concerned, their main orientation is based upon the presuppositions of Vedic sacrifice.

The Vedic ritual, as a process of appropriation, initiates man into a new mode of existence, viz., it allows man to experience existentially a kind of rebirth by participating, through the ritual act, in a form of existence that is not constricted by the restrictive limitations of space-time. This transcendental aspect of Vedic sacrifice becomes explicit particularly in relation to the thread-ceremony sacrament (*upanayana*). Through this initiatory sacrament a person, by dying to the past or to the natural mode of life, is reborn:

> He (that is, the one who has to go through the initiation of thread-ceremony) should be bathed in water, anointed with *navanīta* or clarified butter (symbolising the female organ), and purified with *darbha* of *kuśa* grass. The collyrium is to be put in his eyes, just as it is in the eyes of the newborn. After this, the candidate will have to enter and stay in a hut shaped like a female organ (*yoni*). He should not come out of the hut and must not see the sun. He is to be covered at first with a cloth and then with the skin of a black antelope (*kṛṣṇājina*). So long as he stays in the hut, he will have to keep his hands clasped (*muṣṭi*), just as a child remains in the womb. When all this is done, he will have to come out of the hut still covering the body with the piece of cloth symbolising the vulva because the body comes out of the mother's womb under the coating of placenta.[42]

The Tantric idea of ritual as a process of initiation, and thereby of rebirth, is not different from the Vedic one. It is through rebirth that an initiate realises autonomy from the conditioned mode of existence. It is the dynamic power of ritual that brings this phenomenon about. Through rebirth, an initiate is enabled to apprehend, and thereby appropriate, reality within.

Ritual, however, by itself is powerless, whether Vedic or Tantric, unless empowered or energised by an appropriate mantra.[43] The energy of a mantra consists in disclosing the transcendental dimension of the Absolute, as it is believed that the Absolute as power is contained in the mantra. A mantra should be seen as a process of such activity whereby the transhuman reality, which is the philosophic Absolute, reveals itself through the medium of words. As mantra is seen

to be a container of the power of the Absolute, so it operates accordingly as the creative power of the Absolute within the continuum of space and time. Through the energetic power of mantra, the Absolute, as it were, incarnates itself within space and time as phenomena. In a Tantric ritual the divine powers within the embodied existent are realised by interiorising, through the process of meditation, the syllables of a mantra. Upon realising the divine powers within, a Tāntrika achieves such transcendental awareness that is not available to normal consciousness. A Tantric ritual act is a kind of meditation. It is an act that, through the concentrative meditation on a mantra, allows the divinised powers within to disclose themselves. A mantra, while possessing the creative power of the Absolute (*brahman*), is, in the final analysis of the word, of transcendent nature.

A mantra consists of syllables, and some syllables are believed to be sacred on account of them being the bearers of transcendent power.[44] The most important and celebrated syllables are *A, U, M, (OM)*. Historically speaking, the syllables—*A, U, M*—derive their importance from the ritual sacrifice. It is believed that originally it meant "no more perhaps than a formal word of assent."[45] Whatever its etymological origin may be, the syllables derive their meaning from a ritual act. *Oṃ*, in the words of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[46] "is the respone to a *ṛc:* 'Be it so;' to a *Gātha: Oṃ* is divine: 'Be it so. . . .' From this conception developed the idea that considers *Oṃ* not just a symbol, but divinity itself. It is within this conceptual framework that a mantra in Tantricism is seen as the bearer of divinity.

Out of this ritualisation of syllables arose a new form of thought in which the syllables and words, as bearers of divinity, were used as techniques for deepening the process of introversion of consciousness. In this way a ritual act, through the word-symbol, was itself interiorised, and thereby was used as a means or vehicle for meditation. This interiorisation of a ritual act led to the identification of word-symbol with the vital force (*prāṇa*).[47] The ritual oblations, although offered into fire, are symbolically offered to the vital

breaths. The significance of this development can be seen from the following words:

> If one offers Agnihotra (viz., the Vedic sacrifice), that would be just as if—removing the live coal—he were to pour offering on ashes.[48]

It is through the inherent power of the syllables of a mantra that a ritual act is actualised, and accordingly syllables become the modes of realisation. A ritual act is simply not seen as an act of offering to the divinities; rather the power of the cosmic divinities is contained in the syllables. By uttering or meditating on the syllables, the divine power of the divinities is actualised. It means that a ritual act obtains its divine character through the use of the sacred syllables. It is for this reason that we are told that the syllables issue forth from the Divine.[49] The ritualisation of syllables gains a greater significance when the syllables are viewed as meditation-realisation-techniques. This aspect of a mantra is brought out clearly in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*[50] thus:

> *Auṃ* is *brahman*. *Auṃ* is all this. *Auṃ*, verily, is compliance. On uttering, recite, they recite. With *Auṃ*, they sing the *sāman* chants. . . . With *Auṃ*, the *Adhvaryu* priest utters the response. With *Auṃ*, one assents to offering of fire. With *Auṃ*, a Brāhmaṇa begins to recite: 'May I obtain *brahman*;' thus wishing, *brahman*, verily, does he obtain.

A mantra, as a bearer of divine power, is such a means whereby the adept is enabled to establish union or identity with the divinity to which the mantra is addressed. The most famous mantra, within the Vadāntic tradition, is: *ahaṃ brahmāsmi* (I am *brahman*). In the Tantric Buddhism the most significant mantra is: *Oṃ śūnyatā-jñāna-vajra-svabhāvako ahaṃ* (I am of the nature of *vajra* through the gnosis of *śūnya*). A mantra, as a container of the divine power, is seen to be a pure form of energy of alphabets. It is as energy that mantra effects liberation from the round of rebirths by enabling the adept to realise identity with the Absolute. Dealing with the Transcendent, a mantra, from a phenomenal perspective, ultimately ends up in divine silence.[51]

Closely related to this development of the identification of the syllabes with a ritual act is the idea of male-famale polarity, which in Tantricism expresses itself through the conceptual framework of the Divine Couple as Śiva-Śakti or Prajñā-Upāya. The prototype of the Divine Couple may be traced in the Vedic concept of the Word (*vāc*) and Fire (*agni*).[52] The Word is said to be of female gender, whereas Fire represents male gender. In its evolution, the Word ultimately found its expression through such masculine forms as, for example, *akṣara-brahman, puruṣa,* etc. It is in the context of this evolutionary trend that the male-female polarity needs to be understood.

The Divine Couple within Tantricism is given expression through such concepts as, for example, Śiva-Śakti, Puruṣa-Prakṛti, Prajñā-Upāya, etc. The phenomenalisation of the Absolute is accounted in terms of the Divine Couple. It is the dyad of Being (Śiva) and Becoming (Śakti), Cause and Effect. Thus unity and disunity, continuity and discontinuity within Being is explained thus:

> These two *bindus* (dots, viz., Śiva-Śakti), which enter one another and separate, . . . the white *bindu* and the red *bindu* are known as Kāma-Kāmeśvarī, the divine Husband-Wife, . . . the pair, one, namely, *vimarśa* is the red *bindu*, and the other, *prakāśa*, is the white bindu, and the union of the two is mixed and all powerful, the *svarūpa* (own-being) is the Supreme Self.[53]

Within the Vedic tradition the male-female polarity is not to be seen as giving rise to philosophical dualism. Rather this male-female polarity is used as a means of explaining as to how the Absolute becomes the universe. It is the power to emit within the Absolute that is equated with femininity. Thus it is through the mysterious power of *māyā* that the Absolute emits out of itself all the phenomenal categories of existence. And *māyā* within Tantricism is identical with the Goddess. Indra,[54] through the power of *māyā,* is able to manifest himself in many forms. The Divine Couple is also the prototype of the structural homologisation of man (microcosm) and the universe (macrocosm).[55] As to how homologisation occurs in terms of a ritual act is well described in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[56] where the horse that is to be offered as a sacrificial victim is identified

with the cosmos. Even the personality complex is spoken of in homologised ritual terms.[57] The male-female dyad is also spoken of in terms of ritual fire. The divinities are said to offer the vital energy into the female organ.[58] The offering into the fire within Tantricism signifies that Vajrasattva (the male principle) and Vajravilāsinī (the female principle) offer sacrifice into Vajra (the Absolute), and thereby is realised the state of unity of Being.

The ritualisation of the life-proccesses seems to have terminated in a new epistemological insight with regard to the nature of the Absolute. The epistemological approach to ritual was even applied to the life-fluid. The retention of the life-fluid signified a new understanding concerning the source of life. It was expected that, by ritualising the sexual act, the ejection of the life-fluid will not take place, and thereby the state of immortality could be actualised:

> He should first exhale, then inhale, and say: 'With power, with life-fluid, I reclaim the life-fluid for you.' 'Thus she comes to be without seed.'[59]

Sexuality, within the Vedic context, has not merely been treated in terms of physical orgasm or act. The meaning of the sexual act becomes meaningful if sexuality is interpreted in terms of a ritual act. What actually happens is that the sexual act is transported, when ritualised, onto a different plane, which is the plane of the sacred. Since it is ritual that sacralises sexuality, so it is bound to happen that the ritual itself would be explained by making use of sexual symbols. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[60] the sexual symbolisation of ritual is made quite manifest when the following is said:

> If, in the course of recitation, the priest separates the first two quarters of the verse and brings the other two close together, this is because the woman separates her thigh and the man presses them during pairing; the priest thus represents pairing so that the sacrifice will give a numerous progeny.

In the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*[61] sexuality is so homologised as to terminate into a sacred Vedic chant. It is through the liturgical

chant that sexuality is so sanctified as to eliminate all such traces from it that smell of debased profanity. Thus the sexual act is itself transformed into a sacramental act. The liturgical chant that sanctifies the sexual act is as follows:

> One summons—that is Hiṅkāra.
> He makes request—that is Prastāva.
> Together with the woman he lies down—that is Udgītha.
> He lies upon the woman—that is Pratihāra.
> He comes to the end—that is Nidhana.
> He who knows thus Vāmadevya Sāman as woven upon conpulation comes to copulation, procreates himself from very copulation. . . . One should never abstain from any woman, that is the rule.

If sexuality within the Vedic tradition is expressed and explained through ritualised symbols, then the question arises as to what kind of role has been assigned to the female divinities in such a religio-cultural milieu. The Vedic society, in its earliest phase, was largely pastoral and patriarchical. A society that is constituted by male domination can have very little space left for any significant role for the female gender, which at the religious level would mean that the female divinities would not be assigned the same role that is given to male divinities.[62] It is on account of this male domination that the Vedic poet is pleased on learning that the goddess Uṣas has been raped by Indra.[63] Even though it is the male divinities that were assigned leading role in the Vedas, yet the fact cannot be denied that a number of female divinities too were given significant roles. In the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*[64] the goddess Ambikā is shown as the sister of Rudra who, upon assuming the role of Śiva, would become the husband of Ambikā. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[65] this very goddess is shown to be the wife of Rudra. In later Vedic texts the goddesses, such as, Vairocanī, Durgī, Kātyāyanī, etc., have been assigned with significant roles.[66]

There are some important female deities in the *Ṛgveda*, and these divinities, as it were, constitute the beginning of Tantric history. In the Vedic texts they foreshadow their historical as well as religious importance. They function as transitional-symbolic representations between Vedism and Tantricism. Let

us see what role some of the female deities have played within the Vedic religious framework.

The first important Vedic goddess that comes to mind is the Mother Earth (Pṛthivī). She as the Earth is the Mother, and is spoken of along with the Sky god, namely, Dyaus.[67] The Earth is Mother because she is "the extended one."[68] Although the Goddess may not have well defined character, yet she is not completely destitute of power.[69] The role of the Goddess Pṛthivī is so depicted as to enable her to function as a Mother, and thereby is prayed to be "kindly, full of dwellings and painless."[70] The dead are supposed to enter "into the kindly Mother Earth who will be wool-soft like a maiden."[71]

The Goddess Earth may not in the *Ṛgveda* be so depicted as to be all-powerful, but she, however, is given due recognition in the *Atharvaveda*.[72] The text of the *Atharvaveda* seems to have been composed at such a juncture when the local customs of the aborigines had begun to be assimilated by the Aryans. As a result of this incorporation of non-Aryan practices the Goddess also was given her due role. Thus the all-inclusive Motherhood of the Earth is recognised because on earth subsist the "brown, ruddy and coloured."[73] The Earth as one's Motherland is very much latent in the above understanding of Pṛthivī.[74] The Earth is Mother precisely because in it "live (all) together without any overcrowding and mutual enmity. There is the picture of the happy humanity, living on earth on account of her grace as a loving Mother."[75]

Sarasvatī is the other Vedic Goddess who is associated with Brahmā,[76] and is said to be "the goddess of music, wisdom and knowledge, the mother of Vedas."[77] Being the "watery one,"[78] the Goddess seems to have originally been associated with the river divinity.[79] The water rites or rituals may be located in this Goddess, and these rituals, through the process of internalisation, are used in Trantricism as a means for purification.

The other important Vedic Goddesses we have are Usas, Rātri/Diti.[80] The Goddess Uṣas is lauded because she is associated with light. As a luminous Goddess, she is spoken of as "the Mother of gods,"[81] "daughter of Sky," "wife of the Sun,"[82] etc. As the Goddess of Dawn, Uṣas puts every living creature into motion, and "everything that moves bows down

before her glance."[83] Although given prominence, she, however, suffers, at the hands of Indra: "This Indra was a deed might and manliness which thou didst achieve that thou didst commit the daughter of the Sky (Uṣas). . . . Thou Indra, the great god, didst crush Uṣas, though the daughter of the Sky was exalting herself. Uṣas fled away in terror from her shattered car when the vigorous Indra crushed it. This chariot of her lies broken and dissolved while she herself has fled far off."[84]

The character of the Goddess Usas has to be viewed in relation to that of Rātri, viz., the Goddess of Night.[85] Although being the sister of the Goddess of Dawn, she however is responsible in bringing about the end of the Dawn through her power of veiling darkness. As the Goddess of the Night, she offers protection to creatures during the period of darkness as well as when they are in deep sleep.[86]

The Goddess Vāc or Speech plays a very significant role in the religion that is enunciated by the Vedas. It is she who makes the utterance of a mantra possible, and it is through her power that a sacrifice, through the power of a mantra, gains causal efficiency. The sacrifice, which represents the cosmic structure, also enables Speech to become all-pervasive and all-inclusive.[87] The Goddess of Speech initially spoke that which is mysterious, beyond comprehension. People praise and laud her because she nourishes them on the nectarine milk of wisdom.[88] She, as the obtainer of the drink of immortality (*soma*), is prayed that she may grant faith upon her adorers.[89]

The Goddess Vāc reflects the cosmic structure of the primeval consciousness. The cosmic nature of Vāc becomes quite manifest through her association with Prajāpati, the father of the universe:

> Prajāpati was the universe
> Vāc was a second to him;
> He associated sexually with her;
> She became pregnant;
> She departed from him;
> She produced these creatures;
> She again entered into Prajāpati.[90]

Or again:

> 'Let me (Prajāpati) send forth this Vāc; She will traverse and pervade all this.' He sent her forth. . . . She extended aloft, diffused like a stream of water.[91]

The Goddess Aditi, the unbounded one, "is the earliest name invented to express the infinite."[92] She, as the mother of Dakṣa, is viewed as the mother of divinities. She is not only a mother, but is also a protector of those who petition or seek he protection.[93] The cosmic aspect of the Goddess is explained in terms of seeing her as the personification of the cosmos:[94]

> Aditi is the heaven;
> Aditi is the atmosphere;
> Aditi is the mother, and is father,
> She is son;
> Aditi is all the gods
> And is five sorts of beings;
> Aditi is that that is born;
> Aditi is that that is to be born.

Although in the context of the *Ṛgveda* the female deities, like their male counterparts, may not have been assigned with any significant role, they, however, were able to obtain a greater role and significance in the later Vedic period. The magnification of their role seems to have been facilitated and enhanced from the influence the Aryans received through their encounters with the non-Aryan, or what may be called the aboriginal, religio-cultural realities. The enconunters the Aryans had with cultures other their own are well documented in the *Atharvaveda* in terms of appropriating the non-Aryan cultic strands. From the *Atharvaveda* onwards the process of Sanskritisation of non-Aryan religious practices began at a full speed. The Sanskritisation is a proccss in terms of which the non-Aryan religious practices and experiences are so interpreted as to make them completely Aryan. Also this Sanskritisation is accomplished through what may be called the mystic interiorisation, which in the *Kena Upaniṣad*[95] is expressed through such a transformation of the goddess as to

make her an integral part of the Brāhmaṇic tradition:

> In this episode of the *Kena Upaniṣad*, where the Mother-goddess for the frist time in the orthodox religious and philosophical traditions of India, she—Woman-incarnate—becomes guru of their male gods. She is represented as their mystagogue, their initiator into the most profound and elementary secret of the universe . . . her own essence.[96]

It is now clear that the Goddess, during the Upaniṣadic period, achieves a new significance not only in terms of symbolisation, but also in practical religious terms. This transformation of the Goddess was achieved through the religious influences of the non-Aryans upon the Aryan religious milieu. The names of the Goddess, such as, Kālī, Durgā, Ambikā, indicate that they originally must have belonged to the non-Aryan religious worldview. They were absorbed, through the process of Sanskritisation, into the religious world of the Aryans.[97] Also certain important Tantric practices, such as Yoga, seems to have had their origin in the religiosity of the non-Aryans.

The Non-Aryan Influences

The scholars, prior to the archaeological discoveries in the Indus, believed that the sole cultural bearers of the Indian subcontinent were the Aryans. This opinion, however, had to change itself radically in the light of the archaeological discoveries in the Indus. It is difficult to say as to who were the people that constituted this very advanced Indus culture. It is believed that, prior to the Aryan intrusion, such races as, for example, Dravidian or Muṇḍa constituted the religio-cultural life of Indian subcontinent. Upon their intrusion into the Indian subcontinent, the Aryans were bound to encounter the people of these races. Once this encounter gained momentum, there was bound to occur certain degree of mixture and synthesis between the opposite cultures.[98] The influence of the non-Aryan races upon the Aryans is quite evident at the level of religious praxis.[99]

The earliest scholar who engaged himself in the task of finding out as to what kind of linguistic influeness the Aryans had from the native sources was J. Pryzluski. His studies

concerning the linguistic phenomenon of Kālā[100] has thrown much light on the religious background of the Goddess. He began his study with the intention of finding out as to "whether Kālā means Black god only and Kālī the Black goddess, or if these names allude to Time also, destroyer of everything . . . are 'kālā', 'black,' and 'kāla', 'time,' 'fate,' two different senses for the same word?"[101] And the finding is that

> A non-Aryan root attested in Dravidian has been borrowed by the Indo-Aryans under different forms; *kāl, kal, khal,* and this diversity in sounds added to the converging of the senses is explained by the non-Aryan origin of this root. Between *kālā,* black and *kāla,* time, destiny, a series of intermediates can be exposed from an uninterrupted chain: '*kālakā, kalka, kalusa, kālī, kalkī,*' so that one passes gradually from a concrete 'dark blue, black' to abstract general notions of 'time, fate, death.'[102]

From this linguistic analysis it becomes clear that the Indian religion and culture is the product of synthesis between the Aryan and non-Aryan cultures.[103] The non-Vedic traditions have not to be restricted to the Dravidian framework alone, it also includes into its ambit the Austric and Sino-Tibetan cultures.[104] The earliest form of this synthesis may be seen in the coming together of the Vedic fire ritual and the non-Vedic flower-ritual:

> The ideas of *homa* and *pūjā,* as it is apparent, had their birth in different milieus. The mixed Hindu people, and the Brāhmaṇical faith of mixed origin, inherited both. The *homa* exclusively Aryan, to which non-Aryan had no right as it was the special privilege of the Aryan. But everybody was welcome to the *pūjā* ritual. *Homa* was a rite in which ordinary animal sacrifice was a part: it was known also as *paśu-karma.* In *pūjā,* flowers are essential: it was, so to say, *puṣpa-karma.*[105]

The other term that throws much light on the cultic aspect of the Goddess is the term *asura* (demon). It is the Goddess that confronts the greatest demon, namely, Mahiṣāsura. The term *asura* in the *Ṛgveda* is used in opposition to a divine being (*deva*).[106]

> It (the term *asura*) is itself derived from *asu* 'breath, life' (met with in the *Ṛgveda* two times accompanying the epithet *jīva*, 'the living one,' 1.140.8; 113.16) and must mean he who is in possession of the breath of life . . . he who is 'master of the sources of life, himself drawing from them at will.' It appears a synonym with a compound . . . *asutrip*, 'he who delights in the breath of life, who enjoys it full,' or, as it were, 'he who drinks at the source of life'.[107]

But there is also to be found in the *Ṛgveda* the tendency to treat the *asuras* as evil beings. It is Indra who has the power of withstanding the terrific thunder of the demons: "Weaponless are the *asuras*, the godless! Scatter them with thy wheel, impetuous One."[108] In the *Ṛgveda* there is both the positive as well as negative evaluation of the demons. In the Brāhmaṇas, however, occurs a sharp polarisation between the gods and the demons. It is a rift in which the demons are seen as representing the forces that are evil, whereas the gods embody the principle of goodness. It is out of this conceptual differentiation between good and evil that the Goddess in Tantricism will assume the role of bringing to an end the forces of evil by killing the greatest demon, namely, Mahiṣāsura.

The other element that will form the backbone of Tantricism is the ideology of Yoga. Yoga would become the very life-blood of Tantricism.[109] Its origin may be traced to such non-Vedic tribes that were experts in the methods of ecstasy. It seems that the Aryans did not initially favour the yogic practices. This antagonism towards the non-Vedic tribes is evidenced by an episode that is mentined in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*[110]—and the episode is the slaughter of the three-head son of Tvaṣṭṛ by Indra as well as of throwing of Yatis to wolves. Who are these Yatis? R.P. Chanda has this to say concerning the Yatis:

> The only possible answer to this question is that the Yatis were not the original priests of the Vedic cult like the Bhrigus and Kaṇvas, but of non-Aryan rites practised by the indigenous pre-Aryan population of the Indus Valley. In the legend of the slaughter of Yatis by Indra, we probably hear an echo of the conflict between the native priesthood and the intruding Riṣis of proto-historic period. If this interpretation of the legend is correct, it may be asked what was the religious or magico-religious practice of the Yatis? In classical Sanskrit *yati* denotes an ascetic.

> The term is derived from the root *yat*, to strive, to exert oneself, and is also connectedwith the root *yam*, to restrain, to subdue, to control. As applied to the priest, etymologically *yati* can only mean a person engaged in religious exercises such as *tapas*, austerities and Yoga. The marble statue of Mohenjo Daro with head, neck and body quite erect and half-shut eyes fixed on the tip of the nose has the exact posture of one engaged in practising Yoga. I therefore propose to recognise in these statues the images of Yatis of the proto-historic and prehistoric Indus Valley.[111]

The origin of yogic asceticism seems to have been indigenous —and we have already elsewhere spoken about it. Asceticism is closely associated with generative heat, and on account of this heat it became possible for Prajāpati to give rise to cosmic creation. Thus a close link is established between *tapas* as generative heat and the Tantric orgasmic experience as the foretaste of divine bliss. This generative inner heat, which is as generative and blissful as is the sexual orgasm, is given rise to either by performing various kinds of rituals or by such ascetical practices that enhance one's sensuality. It is an asceticism in which we find, on the one hand, the assimilation of sacrifice and, on the other hand, sacrifice is seen as the main medium of asceticism. The ascetical yogic practices are given a new push by the Brāhmaṇas where the sacrifice is internalised as a means for meditation. It is, however, in the Upaniṣads where asceticism is interpreted in a new key, in that it is seen as the main means of leading to liberative knowledge. Thus the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*,[112] the *Chāndogya*,[113] the *Taittirīya*,[114] and the *Kaṭha*[115] Upaniṣads give us a detailed account of such ascetical practices that would become the foundation of such meditative methods which both the classical Yoga and Tantricism would adopt.

The theme that runs through all the Upaniṣads is the search for the secret knowledge of *brahman-ātman*. It is the knowledge of *brahman-ātman* that bestows liberation upon the one who seeks it. It is this search for immortality that will receive its utmost attention in Tantricism, and the means to be employed for the realisation of this immortal knowledge are yogic in intent and content.[116] In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*[117] this knowledge of *brahman-ātman* is spoken of as a kind of "secret fire that

leads to heaven." The knowledge that is equated to mystical fire is, like orgasm, generated by heat that is produced by asceticism. It is in the warmth of fire that the illuminative glow of bliss is experienced. In some of the Upaniṣads we are given a detailed account of the mystical physiology that would later on be incorporated wholesale by such esoteric yogic schools as Tantricism and Haṭhayoga. In the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* we find such yogic elements worked out that would form the essential components of Tantric praxis. There is an elaborate discussion in the sixth chapter of this Upaniṣad concerning the various yogic practices. The Upaniṣad knows the five limbs of the classical Yoga of Patañjali. It is interesting to note that the limb of *dhāraṇā* is explained in physical terms: "By pressing the tip of his tongue against the palate, by restraining voice, mind and breath, one sees *brahman* through reflection."[118] In 6.21 the *suṣumṇā* artery is spoken of, for it is said to serve as a channel for life-force (*prāṇa*). While meditating on the syllable *Oṃ* when doing the practice of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), this artery helps the practitioner in sustaining the process of meditation.

In this Upaniṣadic text an attempt has been made to explain the methods of visualisation—and visualisation is a very important technique of Tantric meditation. As to how to make use of visualisation in meditation is explained thus:

> By closing the ears with thumbs, they hear the sound of space within the heart. Of it there is sevenfold comparison: like rivers, a bell, a brazen vessel, a wheel, the croaking of frogs, rain, as when one speaks in a sheltered place. Passing beyond this variously characterised, men disappear in the Supreme, Non-Sound, the Unmanifest *brahman*. There they are unqualified, indistinguishable, like the various juices that has reached the condition of honey.[119]

From the above discussion it has become clear that the Indian religious ethos is characterised by the two seeming antagonistic outlooks: Aryan and non-Aryan. The non-Aryan roots go back to the Indus Civilisation, whereas the Vedic religio-cultural life is reflected in the Vedic texts. The Aryans, who came as conquerors, did not initially tolerate the indigenous culture, and tried to uproot, if possible, the native way of life. How-

ever, when cultures meet and encounter each other, they are bound to leave invisible influences upon each other. It is what happened with the Aryan cultural life. In the initial stages the indigenous religions remained on the fringe of Aryan society. But, with the passage of time, the indigenous influences began to penetrate the Aryan religious environment. This penetration resulted in a synthesis that gave birth to the varied and complex religious life of India.

Tantricism has to be viewed in the context of this synthesis, viz., it is an outcome of both Brāhmaṇism and of non-Aryan cultures. Tantricism reflects the composite nature of Indian culture in terms of which it has become part of the ethos of the people. It is this mutual give and take that ultimately made Tantricism acceptable to the people of the Great Tradition.

References

1. *Prāṇatoṣiṇī-tantra*, 6; *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, chap. 1; *Hevajra-tantra*, chap. 1.
2. H.C. Hazra, *Paurāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and Literature*, Dacca, 1940, pp. 260 ff.
3. C. Chakravarti, *Tantras: Studies on Their Religion and Literature*, Calcutta, 1963, chap. 2.
4. J. Gonda, ed., *Hindu Tantrism*, Leiden, 1979, p. 17.
5. N.N. Vasu, *Modern Buddhism and its Followers in Orissa*, Calcutta, 1911, pp. 10-11. H.P. Shastri, in his Introduction to this book, defines Tantricism as the "worship of Śakti or female energy." Gopīnātha Kavirāja is of the same view when he writes that the "Tāntrika worship is the worship of Śakti." *Bhāratīya Saṃskṛti aur Sādhanā*, pt. 1; see also chapter on the "Tāntrika Bauddha Sādhanā."
6. N.N. Vasu, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
7. B. Bhattacharya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism*, Delhi, 1980, p. 43. Tantricism presents the culmination of that syncretistic and integrative effort that was initiated during the Vedic period itself. The Great Tradition, or what is called Brāhmaṇism, not only absorbed the local folk and religious elements, but even, in the shape of Tantricism, took certain elements from foreign countries that bordered the north-western and north-eastern regions of India. Tantricism, in its final shape, is the fructification, both at the religious and philosophical levels of the inclusive theology that both Hinduism and Buddhism, particularly the Mahāyāna, propounded. Rightly does Eliade, in his *Yoga: Freedom*

and Immortality, p. 200, point out that we do "not know why and under what circumstances (Tantricism) came to designate a great philosophical and religious movement, which, appearing as early as the fourth century of our era, assumed the form of pan-Indian vogue from the sixth century onwards. For it was really a vogue, quite suddenly Tantricism becomes immensely popular not only among philosophers and theologians, but also among the active practitioners of the religious life, and its prestige also reaches the 'popular' strata. In a comparatively short time, Indian philosophy, mysticism, ethics, iconography, and even literature are influenced by Tantricism."

8. The important left-hand practices are the so-called Five Ms or five ingredients (*pañca-makāra* or *pañca-tattva*), and they are meat, wine, fish, beans, and coitus.
9. *Rudrayāmala*, chap. 17.
10. *Brahmanyāmala*, paṭala 1.
11. N.N. Vasu, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
12. E.O. James, *The Mother Goddess*, London, 1959, pp. 242-43.
13. Charles Alpha Long, *The Myths of Creation*, New York, 1963, p. 38.
14. E. Neumann, *The Great Mother*, New York, 1955, pp. 9-12. See also W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, 2 vols., Delhi, 1968.
15. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, Washington, 1931, pt. 2, pp. 19-26. Coomaraswamy describes the relationship between water and plants thus: "From the Primeval Waters rose the Plants, and from Plants all other beings, in particular the gods, men and cattle. Rasa, as an essence of the Waters, or as sap in trees, is variously identified with *soma*, *amrita*, semen, milk, rain, honey, mead (*madhu*) and liquor (*sura*); there is a cycle in which the vital energy passes from heaven through the waters, plants, cattle and other typically virile or productive animals, and man, thence, ultimately returning to Waters." Ibid., p. 25.
16. A.A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, New York, 1900, pp. 146 ff.
17. M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Cleveland, 1963, p. 280.
18. *Devībhāgavata-purāṇa*, 9.9.14-26, 49-63.
19. Eliada, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p. 262.
20. J. Marshall, op. cit., 1: 48-58. In this context Marshall's statement has a great significance when he says that "as a whole, their (viz., of the Indus people) religion is so characteristically Indian as hardly to be distinguishable from still living Hinduism or at least from that aspect of it which is bound up with animism and the cult of Śiva and the Mother Goddess. . . ." Ibid., p. vii. See for further information, J.J. Mackay, *Chando-Daro Excavations*, 35-36, New Haven, 1943; M. Wheeler, *The Indus Civilisation*, Cambridge

University Press, 1968; V. Gordon Childe, *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, London, 1964.

21. The symbolic representation of Śiva, as found in the Indus, has been termed by Marshall as a prototypic Śiva.
22. Marshall, op. cit., 1: 52 ff.; pls. xiii.17; xciv.6, 8.
23. M. Wheeler, op. cit., p 91. S.G.F. Brandon is of the view that the people of the Indus "worshipped, undoubtedly among other deities, a goddess which appears to approximate to the type of Mother Goddess known throughout the ancient world of the Near East." *Man and His Destiny in the Great Religions*, London, 1962, p. 304.
24. J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, p. 489: "The nude figurines very often known in . . . ornamented 'ringstones' and other 'discs' are almost invariably associated with plants and vegetation (sometimes with men and animals)."
25. J.H. Mackay, *Early Indus Civilisation*, p. 54.
26. Marshall, op. cit., 1: 52.
27. J.N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 489-90.
28. Marshall, op. cit., 1, pl. xii.17.
29. Ibid., 1: 52. If Śiva on the seals of the Indus is represented as a deity with three horns, it is necessary, then, to point out that Śiva has not been shown such a god in Sanskrit literature that has horns. It is only at one place in the *Mahābhārata* (Vanaparvan, chap. 88) where Śiva is depicted as a deity who has horns. It is, perhaps, possible that the horns might have given rise to the sacred Śaivite symbol, namely, the trident (*triśūla*).
30. Stuart Piggot, *Pre-historic India*, p. 202.
31. Marshall, op. cit., 1, pls. xiii. 7; xxxii. 1.
32. Ibid., pls. xiii.1, 7; xiv.2, 4; M.S. Vats, *Excavations at Harappa*, Delhi, 1950, pp. 51-55.
33. One of the names of the Mother Goddess is Aparṇā, "to be without the garments of leaves," viz., completely naked.
34. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*, New York, 1962, p. 191. The all-pervasive character of the Goddess is so intensely felt within Hinduism, particularly in Tantricism, that she has been equated to the Supreme Being. The *Mahābhārata* describes her as Durgā: "Leader of the armies of the blessed, the dweller in Mandara, the youthful women, Kālī, wife of Śiva, she who is red, black, variegated, the saviour, the giver of gifts; Kātyāyanī, the great benefactress, the terrible one, the victorious one, victory itself. . . . O thou who art the Vedas, who art revelation, who art virtue, Jātavedasi. . . . Thou art Brahmā among the sciences, thou art sleep of incorporate beings, the mother of Skanda, the blessed one, Durgā . . . thou art the mother of the Vedas and Vedānta . . . thou art sleep, illusion, modesty, happiness . . . thou art satisfaction, growth, contentment, light, the increaser of moon. . . . " Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 416.

As the Goddess is conceived as being the creatrix, so she accordingly is the embodiment of womanhood. In Tantricism woman is worshipped because she represents the Goddess. This aspect of the Goddess is explicitly stated in the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra* (10.80) thus: "Every woman is your effigy (viz., of the Goddess). You reside concealed in the forms of all women in this world."

35. The composition of the *Ṛgveda* is said to have taken place around 1500 BC.
36. J. Gonda, op. cit., p. 15.
37. M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature,* 3 vols., Delhi, 1956, 1: 64-65.
38. Ibid., 1: 181.
39. The nature of the Vedic "ritual can be solved at once by the application of the concept of sympathetic magic and this is one of the most obvious and undeniable facts in the whole of the Vedic sacrifice; it is from the beginning to the end full of magic elements." (A.B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda,* Harvard Oriental Series, 1925, pp. 258-59.) This is further confirmed by Macdonell in these words: "Every page of the Sūtras shows that the whole sacrificial ceremonial was overgrown with the notion that the sacrifice exercised power over the gods and, going beyond them, could directly influence things and events without their intervention," in: *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* 8: 312.
40. *The Cultural Heritage of India,* Calcutta, 1956, 4: 213.
41. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.3.2-3.
42. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,* 1.3; H. Webster, *Primitive Societies,* New York, 1932, p. 38.
43. J. Gonda, op. cit., p. 32. Lama Govinda Anagarika speaks of mantra as "the symbol word, the holy sound which, transmitted to the initiate by the preceptor, makes his personality vibrate in consonance and opens it up for higher experience." (*Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism,* London, 1961, p. 90.) Bose and Halder write, ". . . the mantra, which is the concentrated symbol of realisation when received from one in whom the mantra is conscious energy, when repeated by the *sādhaka* elevates him to the same tune and becomes ultimately revealed to the adept *sādhaka.* These mantras are eternal and possess wonderful capacities. . . . " (*Tantras: Their Philosophy,* pp. 123 ff.) A mantra is a mystic sound. The most ancient mantra is *Oṃ,* which was later on identified with the Absolute. In Vedism and Tantricism mantra functions as a means to realisation. In Tantricism, mantra has a close relationship with the yogic exercises. While meditating, a mantra becomes a point for concentration. Also through mantra the ritual act is interiorised. A mantra is not only a symbol; it embodies the Absolute as well as numerous divinities. Thus every divinity has a seed-mantra (*bīja-mantra*), which is considered the very essence of the

deity. An aspirant, while repeating a mantra, interiorises the ontological essence that is contained in it, and thereby appropriates the essence of the deity whose essence the mantra embodies. A mantra in itself may not possess any lexical meaning. It is, however, the very non-meaning that confers meaning on a mantra. The meaninglessness of a mantra leads to the realisation that terminates in the cognition of the emptiness of phenomenality. Accordingly is apprehended what is real as well as what is unreal.

44. Sir John Woodroffe aptly describes the theory of mantra. He writes that "the *parabrahman* (viz., the Absolute) is *śabda-brahman* (viz., Absolute as Logos), whose substance is mantra, exists in the body of the embodied existent (*jīvātmā*). It is either unlettered (*dhvani*) or lettered (*varṇa*). The former, which produces the letters, is the subtle aspect of Jīva's vital *śakti*. When the *mantra-śakti* is awakened through *sādhanā* the presiding deity appears, and when perfect *mantra-siddhi* is acquired, the deity who is *saccidānanda* (existence-consciousness-bliss), is revealed. . . . A mantra is not a prayer. Prayers are conveyed in what words the worshipper chooses. . . . mantra is not the name for things the worshipper wants to tell the deity . . . if it were, the worshipper might just as well use his own language without recourse to the eternal and determined sounds . . . a mantra may, or may not, convey on its face its meaning. *Bīja-mantra* (seed-mantra), such as *aiṅg, kliṅg,* have no meaning, according to the ordinary use of language. The initiate, however, knows that their meaning is the 'own-form' (*svarūpa*) of the particular deity whose mantra they are . . . every mantra is a form (*rūpa*) of Brahman . . . *man* of mantra comes from the first syllable of *manana,* and *-tr* from *trāṇa,* or liberation from the bondage of *saṃsāra* or the phenomenal world . . . whilst, therefore, mere prayer often ends in nothing but physical sound, mantra is a potent compelling force, a word power—the fruit of which is *mantra-siddhi*—and thus effective to produce monistic perception and liberation . . ., by mantra the sought for deity is attained. Though the purpose of worship (*pūjā*), religious reading (*pāṭha*), hymn chanting (*stava*), sacrifice (*homa*), *dhyāna, dhāraṇā, samādhi* and that of mantra is the same, the latter is far more powerful than these. . . . The special mantra which is received in initiation is the *bīja* or seed-mantra, sown in the field of the practitioner's heart." *Introduction to Tantra Śāstra,* third edition, Madras, 1956, pp. 81 ff.

45. A.B. Keith, *Philosophy of the Veda and of Upaniṣads,* 1: 519.

46. Cf. A.B. Keith, *Ṛgveda Brāhmaṇa*: *The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki,* Harvard University Press, 1920.

47. *Chāndogyopaniṣad,* 5.19.24.

48. Ibid., 5.24.1.

49. Ibid., 2.13.3.

50. J.A. Buitenen, "Akṣara," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, July-Sept., 1959, p. 196.
51. Jayaratha, *Tantrāloka-viveka*, 7.225.
52. *Ṛgveda*, 6.47.18; cf. *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.14.
53. *Kāmakalā-vilāsa*, 6, 8.
54. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.7. The following observation of Arbinda Basu is of utmost importance. He writes: "*Prakṛti* or *māyā* is looked upon as of the substance of Devī. Within the womb of Śakti is *māyā* or *prakṛti*; the matrix of the universe, potential in *pralaya* (dissolution) and active in creation. The Sāṃkhya account of evolution from *prakṛti* is followed. Under Śakti's doctrine, *māyā* evolves into the several material elements and physical portions of all sentient beings." "Kashmir Śaivism," in: *Cultural Heritage of India*, 4: 79.
55. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.1.1.
56. Ibid.
57. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 8.1.3.
58. Ibid., 5.7.1; 8.1-2; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 6.2.12-13. While a woman is sanctified through a ritual act, she also is made into a sacrificial altar: "Her body is the sacrificial altar; her hair, the sacrificial grass; her skin, the *soma*-press. The two lips of the vulva are the fire in the middle." Even the process of conception is ritualised:

    Let Viṣṇu make the womb prepared!
    Let Tavṣṭṛ shape the various forms!
    Prajāpati, let him pour in!
    Let Dhatri place the germ for thee!
    O Sinivali, give the germs!
    O give the germs, thou broad tressed dame!
    Let the Twin gods implant the germ!
    The Aśvins crowned with lotus-wreaths.
    Chāndogyopaniṣad, 6.4.21.

59. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 5.4.10.
60. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 10.3.2-4.
61. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 2.13.1-2. Although the female deities are not very prominent in the Vedic religion, yet the Tantric rite of addressing the male and female aspects of Reality may correspond to the Vedic rite of Apsaras and Gandharvas. See A.B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, 1: 180.
62. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 214.
63. *Ṛgveda*, 2.15.16; 4.30.8-11; 10.75.6; 138.5.
64. *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, 3.57; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.6.10.4-5.
65. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, 10.18.
66. Ibid., 10.17.
67. *Ṛgveda*, 5.84.

68. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, 7.1.1 ff.; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.1.3.
69. *Ṛgveda*, 6.84.
70. J. Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, third ed., 5 vols., Amsterdam, 4: 36-37.
71. *Ṛgveda*, 1.5, 22; 10.18.10.
72. *Atharvaveda*, 12.
73. Ibid., 12.1.
74. Embree, *The Hindu Tradition*, p. 46.
75. C. K. Raja, *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, Bombay, 1962, p. 25.
76. J. Muir, op. cit., 5: 430.
77. Ibid., 2: 10-14.
78. E.O. James, op. cit., p. 109.
79. *Ṛgveda*, 5.46.7; 10.30.10-12.
80. Ibid., 1.48.49, 113-24; 2.61; 4.51.52; 5.62; 64.65; 6.2.11; 7.75; 10.127.
81. Ibid., 1.113.9.
82. Ibid., 7.75.4.
83. Ibid., 1.48.8; 92.9.
84. Ibid., 4.3. 8-11; see also 2.15.6; 10.73.6-10.
85. Ibid., 10.127; cf. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 404.
86. Basham, op. cit., p. 404.
87. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 6.1.1.9.
88. *Ṛgveda*, 8.89.10-11; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 5.8.1.
89. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.27; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 3.2.4; *Atharvaveda*, 5.7.1.5.
90. Muir, op. cit., 5.392.
91. *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, 20.14.2.
92. Muir, op. cit., 5; 392.
93. *Ṛgveda*, 1.153.3; 8.101.15; *Atharvaveda*, 6.4.1.
94. *Ṛgveda*, 1.89.10.
95. *Kena Upaniṣad*, 3.11; 4.1-2.
96. Campbell, *The Masks of God*, 2: 205.
97. *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, 2.57; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.6.10.
98. Cf. J.V. Ferreira, *Totemism in India*, p. 263, n. 3.
99. J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, The Hague, 1965, p. 13.
100. Jean Pryzluski, "From the Great Mother to Kāla," *The Indian Historical Quarterly* 14 (1938), pp. 267-74.
101. See C.S. Levi, J. Pryzluski, and J. Block, *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India*, trans. P.C. Bagchi, Calcutta, 1929.
102. J. Pryzluski, op. cit., p. 272.
103. S. K. Chatterji, *The Indian Synthesis, Racial and Cultural Inter-Mixture in India*, Poona, 1953, p. 51.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., p. 53.
106. *Ṛgveda*, 1.35.7, 10; 2.27.10.
107. A. Bergaigne, *La Religion vedique d'apres les hymnes de Ṛgveda*, Paris, 1883, 3:73.

108. *Ṛgveda*, 8.85.9.
109. R. Garbe, in: *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 12: 833.
110. *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, 3.1.
111. R.P. Chanda, *Indo-Aryan Races*, Rajshahi, 1916, p. 33.
112. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.5.23.
113. *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 8.15.
114. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.4.
115. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.12.
116. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.3.28; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 6.9.
117. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.14.
118. *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, 6.20-21.
119. Ibid., 6.24. The meditative technique of visualisation reaches its goal when a Yogī, through the ritual purificiation of elements (*bhūtaśuddhi*), succeeds in homologising his body with the macrocosm. It is through homologisation that a body becomes a fit medium for the presence of the deity, which, through this technique, is being meditated upon. The Yogī, through constant practice of this technique, is able, upon the intensification of meditation, to bring about dissolution of that that pertains to the body. The *Vijñānabhairava* (v. 284) tell us: "One should meditate on the All in the form of the Paths of the world-orders, etc., considered in their gross, subtle and supreme forms until, at the end, the mind dissolves away."

    The Yogī, while in meditation, discovers that the macrocosm is within him. Through visualisation, he recreates the totality of reality, which, in other words, means the world-orders, metaphysical principles, cosmic forces, etc. Thus there is constant dissolution as well as opening up of the entire reality within the Yogī's body. Abhinavagupta accordingly informs us in his *Tantrāloka* (8.7.8): "Once (the Yogī) has known (this) Path in its completeness, he must then dissolve it into the deities that sustain it and these successively into the body, breath, mind (and emptiness) as before, and all these into his own consciousness. Once this is full and an object of constant worship, it destroys, like the fire at the end of time, the ocean of transmigration."

    The aim of visualisation is to dissolve all diversity into the unity of consciousness. This dissolving of diversity into the Fire of Consciousness is called the *dehacintā*. The Yogī succeeds in burning away diversities to the extent he exerts his imagination in intensifying the meditation of visualisation. The *Vijñānabhairava* (v. 52) teaches: "Visualise the fortress (of your body) burning with the Fire of Time (*kālāgni*) risen from the Abode of Time; then at the end peace manifests."

5

Tantricism: Theory and Practice

Tantric Esotericism

TANTRICISM, WHETHER HINDU OR BUDDHIST or any other variety, is such a mode of religious consciousness in which gnosticism,[1] as an esoteric or secret (*guhyam*)[2] expression of human spirituality, is the essence of its religious practice and belief system. Tantricism is characterised by such religious practices that have a direct link with the mythic consciousness of humanity as as well as with such mystical experiences that are experimental rather than faith-oriented. The secret practices have been so interpreted as would bestow upon them the transcendent character, and thereby would be seen as "revelation" than as mere human methods or techniques. The secret practices are given the character of revelation on account of their power of leading the practitioner to the mystical experience that is meta-empirical. Not only are the secret practices and the mystical experiences considered as being revelatory, but the literature that contains them, too, is viewed as being of divine origin. Since everything for Tantricism, from the lowest to the highest, is permeated by the presence of divine spirit, so nothing, not even the most sinful aspects of life in the world, remains untouched by the Divine. This esoteric, and also revelatory spirituality is enunciated in the contents of such texts that are commonly called the Tantras or Āgamas. The contents of the Tantras are of esoteric nature because the imparting of the knowledge of mystic consciousness is given to the one who has been initiated in the

Tantric lore, and, above all, the process of initiation[3] and of transmission of knowledge itself occurs in secrecy. As the entire import of Tantricism is esoteric in nature, it is but evident that Tantricism as such, whether Hindu or Buddhist, has been spoken of as something that belongs to the realm of secrecy. It is this secrecy that is the main characteristic mark of Tantricism.

Tantricism as a religious search for meaning should be seen as the culmination of yogic experimentation with regard to mind-body complex. It is such a religious movement of assimilation and synthesis, within the broad parameters of Indian religious history, whose early beginnings are quite visible in the Vedas themselves. It would be quite erroneous to maintain that Tantricism merely represents a new form of Yoga or religious philosophy while having no links with the past. Both Yoga and philosophy, no doubt, play a very important role in Tantricism. But Tantricism, however, is much more than Yoga or philosophy. It is a specific kind of life-style or way of life. Tantricism as a definite way of life made its first appearance most probably during the beginning of our era. However, it transformed itself into a pan-Indian religious movement between AD 500 and 1200. Tantricism, as a specific religious movement, has been codified in the texts called Tantras or Āgamas. The Tantric texts that have come down to us have been written in such a way as would either be considered symbolic or ambiguous. It is the ambiguity of language that has bestowed the epithet upon the Tantric texts as being the containers of what technically is called "twilight language" (*sandhyā-bhāṣā*). It is a form of language that is difficult to understand on account of its ambiguity in meaning. They alone can decode the mysterious language of Tantras who have been initiated into the secret aspects of Tantricism by a competent Tantric teacher (*guru*).

Being basically concerned with a structure of spirituality whose orientation is rooted in secrecy, Tantricism thereby makes its character explicit in terms of its concern with the methods of salvation than with philosophical or theological questions. Tantricism, thus, does not so much aim at establishing its own doctrinal or metaphysical system of thought

as much as at making its methods of salvation efficacious. It is so because Tantricism has to be seen more as a religious movement with a specific kind of life-style. Although it came in conflict with the existing doctrinal systems,[4] yet the dividing line between Tantricism and the various other doctrinal systems has always remained fluid. The conflict, if it ever arose in relation to the non-Tantric religious practices, has always been marginal. In the case of Hinduism, we see at the very initial stage a clear-cut conflict between Brāhmanism and Tantricism, but, at the level of religious praxis, there is a process of assimilation of each other's practices. Brāhmaṇism shows this spirit of assimilation in the adoption of such Tantric practices that suited it the most. Similarly Tantricism makes Brāhmaṇical doctrinal systems the basis of its spirituality. In the case of Buddhist Tantricism it is the Mahāyāna metaphysical framework that has provided the essential doctrinal framework for such Tantric schools as, for example, Vajrayāna or Tantrayāna. As Tantricism does not aim at propounding new metaphysical or doctrinal lines of thought, so it has accordingly confined itself to the task of making its practices more result-oriented and in terms of which could concretely be exprienced those doctrinal principles that it has assimilated. What Tantricism, therefore, aims at is to devise such ways and means whereby could be realised mystically such fundamental doctrinal principles that it has assimilated either from Brāhmaṇism or from Mahāyānism. The ways and means that Tantricism has devised towards this goal are by and large of esoteric character, and it is this esotericism that really makes our subject very fascinating and interesting.

Before we proceed any further, it is necessary that the idea of secrecy in Tantricism be understood properly and appropriately. That which is of secret nature has generally been interpreted negatively, viz., something unwanted or undesirable. It would be totally out of step if Tantric practices, or Tantricism per se, is so interpreted. Tantric esotericism has not to be understood as a kind of religious mystery similar to the mystery cults of Greece. The esoteric aspect of Tantricism has to be looked at from the perspective of the religious history of India.

The idea of religious secrecy has its basis and foundation in the Upaniṣads itself. The Upaniṣadic seers did not transmit the transcendental knowledge to all and sundry. The teachings were imparted within a particular social group of people. Basically the secret teachings were connected with the performance of ritual. A universal symbol was given rise to when a particular ritual was appropriated through the process of instruction in the secrets of knowledge of salvation. Through appropriation an organic relationship between the universe and the ritual was established in terms of the ritual-symbol. Although from an external or social point of view Tantric practices are cosidered as being esoteric in nature, yet from a functional viewpoint these practices, through the medium of ritual-symbol, are causally so efficient as to lead to the appropriation of intended realities, and thereby the practitioner of these practices is enabled to experience the appropriated realities concretely. The Tantric idea of secrecy is to be seen as a method of assimilating and appropriating such realities as would enable the practitioner to experience them concretely.

The method of appropriation in Tantricism should be analysed particularly in the context of the cult of the Mother Goddess. The Goddess is thought of as the guardian and protector of the life-sustaining fields, viz., fields that sustain life by producing food. In this manner the Goddess sustains and preserves the lives of all creatures. The products of the Earth are not simply to be treated as a form of wealth. They, rather, manifest the transcendental sacrality of the Goddess. Thus the Goddess, as a symbol of the Divine, is understood as the basis of life. Seen in this role, it is essential to know the Goddess as creatrix. The knowlege of the Goddess as creatrix is possible by penetrating the secret processes of the Goddess—and this penetration is actualised through the enactment of such rituals that are seen to be causally efficacious. The penetration, through ritual, into the secret processes is achieved upon appropriating divinity of the Goddess. This vision of the Goddess is beautifully reflected in the famous *Hymn to the Goddess.* In the hymn the Goddess is projected as "the origin of all prosperity,"[5] "the giver of

wealth and prosperity."[6] The Goddess as the source of sustaining food is well reflected in the *Hymn of Annapūrṇā*. The name of the Goddess as Annapūrṇā itself connotes "the one who is replete with food." In this hymn we are told:

> Whoever, having recited the mantra daily,
> reads this hymn at the dawn of the day,
> obtains wealth of rice
> and prosperity.[7]

The esoteric content of the hymn is made quite explicit in the concluding stanza:

> Not to all and any should this hymn be revealed,
> for be it made known to one who is unworthy,
> then ill falls upon him;
> therefore should it be carefully concealed.[8]

Meaning of the Term: Tantra

The term *tantra*, through its evolutionary phases, has incorporated into itself a variety of meanings. The term has been used, depending on the context, in a variety of ways, and therefore the meaning of the term too has been varied. Initially the term was used in a general way, as it did not have a specific technical meaning. The Vedic texts have made use of the term in the sense of a loom,[9] and Pāṇini,[10] the father of Sanskrit grammar, also has used the term in a similar sense. It seems that the term *tantra*, from the very beginning, has an organic relationship with the idea of weaving, loom and warp. On the basis of the idea of loom the grammarians derived the word from the root *tan*, which is said to mean "to extend," "to propagate," and so on. The term, in the context of its root meaning, has been interpreted to mean "the scripture(-s) by which knowledge is spread" (*tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena iti tantram*).[11]

There are various other meanings associated with the term. The meaning of the term, in the light of the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali,[12] has been used in the sense of knowledge in general. Many branches of knowledge have, thus, been designated by the term *tantra*, such as, *Nyāya-tantreṣu*, *Sāṃkhya-tantreṣu*, *Cikitsā-*

tantreṣu, etc. It is in the context of such usage that Śaṃkara, in his *bhāṣya* on the *Brahmasūtra*,[13] refers to the philosophical system of Sāṃkhya as *tantra*. The term has also been used to refer to a particular book or books, such as, *Pañcatantra*.[14] Most of the writers, after Śaṃkara, have made use of the term in relation to a specialised branch of knowledge. Bhāskararāya, a great Tantric scholar, spoke of the Mīmāṃsā system of philosophy as the *Jaiminī-tantra*.

The specific and restricted meaning of the term, as applied to the Tantric system of thought and literature, came into existence at a period of history when Tantricism, as a religious movement, had achieved its distinctive character. It is in this specific sense that the term, in the *Kāmikāgama*,[15] has been used to denote such a class of literature that concerns itself with matters that pertain to the transcendental realm and with techniques (*sādhana*) that make it possible to appropriate the Divine. From this explanation it may be concluded that the term has been restricted in its scope and range of meanings. The term, in its restrictive sense, refers to a specific class of texts whose subject matter concerns itself with the Divine and with the methods of realisation. As a technical branch of knowledge, Tantras concern themselves with solutions that would lead to the attainment of knowledge of the Absolute.[16] The term is also used in relation to a religious system of thought (*śāstra*), viz., a system of thought that concerns itself with the means and methods of meditation (*sādhana*)[17] for the purpose of attaining transendental gnosis.[18]

The Tibetan term, *rgyud*, expresses the exact meaning as to what the term *tantra* signifies within the overall framework of Tantricism. The term signifies such "a ritual book (that is meant) for coercing deities and for other general magical ceremonies."[19] The term, from a technical standpoint, embodies such texts that deal with mantras,[20] secret initiations, mystical diagrams, yogic discipline,[21] etc. Tantricism, on the one hand, signifies certain methods and practices that have a ritualistic and meditative orientation and, on the other hand, it expresses a particular life-style, which in intent and content is antinomian and subversive. Although Tantricism differs radically from Vedism in its outlook and praxis, it however shares a common

soteriological interest with Brāhmaṇism, which is the attainment of liberation (*mukti*) from the cycle of rebirths. As in Vedism, so in Tantricism the methods, practices and rituals are also used for the attainment of worldly goals (*bhukti*).[22] Tantricism also signifies, though not exclusively, Śākta schools (*sampradāya*) in terms of succession (*paramparā*) of teachers. The teachings that the teachers have imparted are collectively called *sādhana*, that is, methods of spiritual exercise.

The Tantric methods of liberation or salvation are open to all men and women, young and old. It rejects the Brāhmaṇical order of caste system. Since Tantricism is open-minded in its attitude, it has, in different degrees of intensity, penetrated Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, Jainism, and Buddhism. It is because of its open-door policy that Tantricism, in one form or the other, has influenced each strata of Indian society.

General Features of Tantricism

Basic to Tantricism is non-dualistic system of philosophy and such practices that, when viewed exteriorly, seem to be strange and bizarre. It believes in the use of the magical diagrams (*yantra*), in ritualistic circles (*maṇḍala*),[23] in the occult use of wine and flesh, in the psycho-physical discipline (*yoga*),[24] in astrology, in alchemy,[25] and so on.

It would be quite erroneous to assume that Tantricism has nothing better to offer than to engage in bizarre and outlandish practices. Tantricism is much more than what appears to us as strange. It has developed an affirmative outlook with regard to the world, and has affirmed decisively that the presence of the Divine is not far away from us, but is within us. This thinking is based upon the understanding that the world we live in, and of which we are a part, is nothing but the emission of the Lord itself, which means that the world has come out of the Divine Womb. From this conceptual understanding is concluded that the world is permeated by the presence of the Divine, and so should be treated as the embodiment of sacrality. It is on the basis of this thinking that Tantricism maintains that the macrocosm (Supreme Being) and microcosm (individual being) are identical and not different. It means that the so-called subject-object duality that is experienced in

day-to-day life has no actual ontological foundation. Whatever significance it may have, it is only epistemological, and nothing more than that.

Although Tantricism adheres strictly to a non-dualistic philosophical outlook, it however introduces a relative kind of dualism in order to explain as to how the phenomenalisation, in the form of objective world, of Supreme Being occurs. The theory of relative dualism is conceived in terms of the Divine Couple as Śiva and Śakti. It is a doctrine that explains as to how the Supreme Being, at the relative level of understanding, parallels male-female polarity. At the practical level of religious praxis, Tantricism seeks the fusion of the two in terms of which the transcendental bliss (*mahā sukha*) is experienced. At the transcendental level the fusion of the male-female, Śiva-Śakti, terminates in the experience of the unity and oneness of Being.

Śiva, as the embodiment of male principle, is viewed, at the transcendental level, as being of the nature of pure light of consciousness (*prakāśa*), which in metaphysical terms is equated to pure Being. As light of consciousness, Śiva is passive, and so cannot effect the emergence of the categories of existence. In order to insert creative urge within Being, Tāntrikas thereby have spoken of Being as consisting of dynamism (*vimarśa, spandana, śakti*). In its transcendent aspect Being is passive and pure light, whereas in its immanent aspect it is creative and dynamic. Both these aspects of Being have been so anthropomorphised as to equate them, at the relative level of understanding, to male-female polarity. Thus Being as male-female polarity is known as the Divine Couple or what popularly is called Śiva-Śakti dyad. Thus Śakti as creative power is co-essential with Being. The Absolute manifests itself as the world (*idaṃ*) through the creative power called Śakti. At the phenomenal level, the essential unity of Śiva and Śakit is shown in terms of the intimate embrace of the Divine Couple. The iconographical details of the embrace of the Divine Couple are intended to show that Śiva and Śakti as being essentially one, though representing two aspects—passive and active, male and female—of the One at the phenomenal level. Analogously speaking, the same yardstick is applied to man and woman. Both of them are essentially of single essence. Due to pri-

mordial ignorance, the unity of Being is not recognised or perceived or experienced. To restore unity, Tantricism has devised an elaborate system of practical methods by the use of which the practitioner is expected to have the experience of the unity of Being within. The aim of these Tantric methods is to enable the adept to have the experience of the unity of Being within the continuum of Becoming. If this is so, it would mean that the essential nature of Being also is Becoming. It is a viewpoint that asserts that Being, by reducing itself to Becoming, empties itself, figuratively speaking, of its Beingness. As the essential nature of Being is Becoming, so Śiva has no significance apart from Śakti:

> Only when united with Śakti has Śiva the power to create,
> but without her God is unable even to stir.[26]

The Absolute that contains within itself the urge to manifest itself as the universe cannot be termed as being impersonal. Such an Absolute has to be personal. It is within this conceptual framework that the Tāntrikas think of the Absolute as possessing the powers of will (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). On account of these absolute powers the Absolute is equated with absolute freedom (*sarvasvatantrya-śakti*). The Absolute of Tantricism is unlike the passive *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta. It is the Śakti aspect that reflects the absolute powers of the Absolute. Therefore, it is Śakti, the creative power of the Absolute, which is seen as the creatrix of the manifest world. In other words, it means that the Many, which are constitutive of the diversity of the manifest world, have come out of the One and shall return unto the One. Tantricism, however, would not like to be lebelled either as a dualist or non-dualist, because:

> Some favour non-dualism and others favour dualism. They do not know My teaching which transcends (both) dualism and non-dualism.[27]

Insofar as the manifestation of the One as the diverse elements of existence is concerned, it is the One that manifests itself through definite stages by atomising itself as phenomenal

entities. It is a theology that believes that the Absolute, by becoming the limited entity, reduces itself to the category of finitude. In this way the assertion that the Divine is present in the phenomena is transformed into an actuality. The stages through which the One manifests itself are technically called as "the categories of existence" (*tattva*), which are said to be thirty-six in number. These categories of existence characterise the entire cosmos, from the Absolute (Paramaśiva) to the grossest particle of matter.

For a Tāntrika the Absolute is of the nature of pure awareness (*cit*). Insofar as the phenomenality is concerned, it too is viewed as consisting of awareness, though in a restricted manner. It is so because the world is nothing but the grossification of the Absolute as consciousness. Śakti, as the dynamic aspect of the Absolute, acts as an agent of concealment of the Absolute at the time when the urge for manifestation is initiated. It is through the process of concealment that the unity of Being, as it were, is transformed into the phenomenal diversity. The revelation of Being as single, one and undivided occurs when the categories of existence are transcended through the process of one category of existence merging into the other till all of them merge in Paramaśiva. In its manifest form the Absolute is atomised as a particular, and this atomisation occurs on account of Śakti. The Absolute in its atomic condition is also known as *kuṇḍalinī* or the coiled one. As *kuṇḍalinī,* the Absolute as Śakti is said to be lying in the dormant condition at the base of the rectum. It is the aim of Tantric spiritual praxis to awaken this dormant power of *kuṇḍalinī* so that it may transcend its limited state by merging in the Absolute.

The Tantric spiritual praxis or Yoga is cosely associated with some secret rituals. Though there are some Tantric teachers, like Sarha, who give no improtance to ritual, yet Tantricism *per se* feels the need for rituals as a means of energising the yogic practices. The process of Tantric praxis or Yoga is technically called *sādhanā.* The Tantric praxis, broadly speaking, has been classified into the right-hand (*dakṣiṇācāra*) and the left-hand (*vāmācāra*) practices. In the Tantric ritual, particularly of the left-hand variety, the use of five forbidden ingredients is

essential—and the forbidden ingredients, also known as the Five Ms (*pañca-makāra*), are as follows:

1. *madya*—wine
2. *māṃsa*—meat
3. *matsya*—fish
4. *mudrā*—fried beans
5. *maithuna*—sexual intercourse

The adherents of the right-hand way (*dakṣiṇācārī*) make use of the Five Ms through symbolic substitution, whereas the left-hand adherents (*vāmācārī*) make use of them in actuality. The aim of the first four ingredients is to prepare the practitioner (*sādhaka*) for the sexual act, which is the last ingredient, by stimulating his senses. The performance of the sexual act is the culmination of the entire ritual process. The sexual intercourse, at the physical level, gives immense joy to both man and woman. By means of copulation the practitioner intends to make use of his sexuality as a means of breakthrough or a facilitating factor for the attainment of transcendental bliss. It would, therefore, be erroneous to say that sexuality is used as a means of self-gratification or indulgence. Since the sexual act is used for transcendental purposes, so no debasement of sexuality as such is involved. The sexual act is used as a means for the experience of such a transcendental union whereby distinction of male and female is completely eliminated. Whether one follows the left-hand way or the right-hand way, the aim is to experience the transcendental bliss in terms of the unity of Being.

The antinomian character of Tantricism is reflected in its use of the Five Ms. Tantricism is completely opposed to such a kind of spirituality that believes that the soteriological goal of salvation is reached through renunciation of the world. Instead of renunciation, Tantricism believes in the enjoyment of the sense pleasures. Having a positive attitude towards the sense pleasures, Tantricism thereby not only values the human body, but also sees it as a fit means of arriving at the transcendental joy that ensues upon experiencing the unity of Being within. For a Tāntrika the human body is the container and

receptor of all divine potencies. As such it is the best medium for realising liberation in terms of the experience of the bliss of non-dual Being.

It will be of great importance at this point of discussion to analyse some of the main symbols that Tantricism upholds and values. Tantric symbols do not simply function as epistemological conduits. They are, rather, employed as methods or techniques for the appropriation of Being itself. It is because of this reason that much emphasis is laid upon the concrete forms of experience. It is not the conceptual knowledge that is of importance. It is the experience of realities, both manifest and unmanifest, that is of great importance to a Tāntrika.

Although there is a lot of difference between Hindu and Buddhist Tantric imagery, there are, however, very many common elements that bind them to each other. One of the main orientations of Tantricism is the identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm.[28] In the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*[29] a detailed account of this equation, viz., microcosm parallels macrocosm, is to be found. Tantric symbols are not merely as modes of realisation; they are also the processes of interiorisation. Take, for example, the case of the mystical centres (*cakra*) in the body. It is believed that at the base of the spine is located the root-*cakra* (*mūlādhāra-cakra*). In the middle of the centre is a yellow square, which represents the element earth (*pṛthivī*). Within the square is a triangle, representing the female aspect (Śakti) of the Absolute. In the centre of the triangle is a phallus (*liṅga*), which represents the male aspect (Śiva) of the Absolute. The Goddess, who is represented by the symbols of earth and triangle, is again represented in the form of a coiled snake called *kaṇḍalinī.* The Goddess is shown, in her sleeping form, as coiled around the phallus. While in sleep, the Goddess as the serpent covers the opening of the phallus.

It will not only be a mistake, but audacious, to interpret this imagery merely in sexual terms. The triangle and the phallus, no doubt, represent the male and female aspects of the Absolute, and therefore may be considered as being sexually inspired images. But sexuality in itself, however, does not explain as to what the symbolism of the root-*cakra* stands

for. Such-like images or symbols are cosmic in nature, in that the triangle and the serpent are the expressions of the primal state of Becoming. The triangle apex downward is the most abstract symbol of the Goddess as the creatrix of the manifest world. The earth is the symbol of motherhood, and therefore of life. The only images in the mystical centre that have a sexual bearing are the coiled snake (*kuṇḍalinī*) and the phallus (*liṅga*). But the coiled snake can also be interpreted in terms of expressing the idea of mystical time, of time before time began.[30]

The sleeping coiled snake (*kuṇḍalinī*) may also be interpreted as signifying the state of inertia. This symbol, however, has to be seen in relation to the earth as the basis and source of existence. The sleeping coiled snake and her covering the opening of the phallus (*liṅga*) expresses the fact of her being the source of the universe that is not yet manifest. We are told that the mystical centre, called the root-*cakra*, is composed of matter, sound, odour and outgoing breath (*apāna*). There is also presence of Kandarpa, the god of love, in this mystical centre. Kandarpa, as the Lord of existence (*jīveśa*), upholds and sustains existence in the world. This symbolism agrees with the assertion that the unmanifest has the possibility of becoming manifest. Insofar as the symbolism of the Goddess as vulva (*yoni*), in the form of triangle, is concerned, it explains and expresses the idea of orgasmic passion (*kāmarūpa*).[31] *Kāmarūpa* is the symbol of the manifest, because it is orgasmic passion that actualises the manifestation of the unmanifest in the seed (*bīja*). It is interesting to note that Kāmarūpa is also a very sacred Tantric pilgrim centre in Assam. The triangle is also spoken of as the triadic city (*tripura*).[32] Tripura is said to be a dwelling-place of the Goddess Tripurā.

The arousal of the dormant coiled snake, viz., of *kuṇḍalinī*, is of utmost importance in Tantricism. The coiled snake, when aroused, moves upward through the central mystical channel called *suṣumṇā*. To the right and left of the *suṣumṇā* are *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels, which parallel the *lalanā* and *rasanā* channels of Buddhist Tantricism. The *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* veins symbolise the sun and the moon, life and death. These two channels also have been identified with the life-giving rivers.

These two veins also demonstrate that opposites necessarily do not express themselves in terms of male-female polarity, as both the veins are of feminine gender. There are, however, some texts that do not allow this kind of generalisation, as, for example, *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*[33] identifies *iḍā* with Śakti and *piṅgalā* with Puruṣa.

The above discussion has shown that Tantric symbolism is complex and intricate. It is now clear that Tantric imagery or symbolism needs to be interpreted with care and caution. Each image has many layers or shades of meaning. At the phenomenal level, the images may seem to be sexual in orientation, but their aim is to point out the way towards that that is behind what appears to the senses.

The Nature of Reality

Quite a number of Indian schools of thought, in one way or the other, are dualistic, and thereby pluralistic in orientation, in that they have accepted more than one entity to be real. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school maintain the existence of several elements, such as, atoms, souls, mind, time, space, God, etc. The Mīmāṃsā school agrees with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika on many points. The Sāṃkhya-Yoga accept the eternal existence of Nature (*prakṛti*) and Self (*puruṣa*). For the Sāṃkhya-Yoga Nature serves as an insentient root element (*mūla-prakṛti*), which is seen as serving the source of all mental and physical elements. Insofar as the Self is concerned, it is considered, in comparison to Nature, to be of the nature of sentiency, and so is equated with the religious conception of soul. Insofar as number of souls is concerned, it is countless, or, should we say, the number of souls is in proportion to the number of existents. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, particularly southern Śaivism, are pluralistic in nature, in that they believe in the eternal existence of God, soul and matter.

The orthodox Buddhism, as a non-Vedic religion, does not at all permit any kind of metaphysical speculation with regard to the nature of ultimate reality. For the Buddhists the nature of reality is analysed in terms of emptiness. Though the orthodox schools of Buddhism may be pluralistic in their philosophical approach, yet they are of the view that no such

entity as permanent self exists. All phenomena are insubstantial and impermanent. The so-called phenomenal existence is seen to be characterised by momentary groups of mental and material attributes. All the phenomenal attributes are merely momentary appearances of a beginningless ignorance. There is no permanent substance within or outside the universe that could be considered as the basis of existence. Every entity is generated in a moment and, while generating other entity, passes away itself in a moment. It means that the phenomenal show that appears lasts only for a moment. This process of momentary show of appearance goes on endlessly. One of the Mahāyāna schools, namely, Yogācāra, accepts the reality of consciousness, but this consciousness is not permanent. It is subject to flux, and so is equated to the continuous flow of running water in a stream. This flowing consciousness manifests itself in the form of mental states and physical entities on account of past impressions (*saṃskāra*) that have been stored in the storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*). The orthodox schools of Buddhism accept the flow of two kinds: (a) mind and mental states and (b) matter and material entities. Both these flows, however, are of momentary nature. As far as Tantric Buddhism is concerned, it does not differ much in its interpretation concerning the nature of reality from such Mahāyāna schools as, for example, the Mādhyamaka school of Nāgārjuna and the Yogācāra school of Asaṅga.

Though the Vaiṣṇava school of Vallabha professes to be non-dualistic, yet, on investigation, the claim does not stand the test. The school, however, comes very close to the philosophy of qualified non-dualism (*viṣiṣṭādvaita*) of Rāmānuja. Insofar as the Vīraśaiva school of Bāsava is concerned, it is difficult to ascertain as to whether the school is non-dualist or not. It is so because the interpretation of the nature of reality as *sāmrasya* has not been explained satisfactorily. In other words, the Vīraśaivas are not explicit in explaining as to what is the nature of the relationship that occurs between the liberated soul (*jīvanmukta*) and God. If *sāmrasya* is interpreted as sameness, then the Vīraśaiva thinking is very close to the non-dualism of Śaṃkara. The Advaita of Śaṃkara, although non-dualistic, is not sufficiently theistic, in that it bends towards

the *śūnyavāda* of Buddhism by reducing *brahman* to a lifeless state.[34]

Most of the Tantric schools of thought, though sufficiently theistic, are philosophically non-dualistic. The Tantric theism stems from the fact that its Absolute, unlike the *brahman* of Advaita Vedānta, is not a powerless entity. The Absolute is God, in that it is in possession of absolute powers of will, knowledge and action, and accordingly is identified with absolute freedom (*sarva svātantrya*). It is a God that is seen as the substratum of all manfestation. The Absolute as it is in itself is transcendent, and so is beyond the reach of mind and intellect. Whatever explanation is given concerning the nature of the Absolute, it is only in terms of approximations. The Absolute is neither Śiva nor Śakti nor any other entity that may be conceived by the intellect. The Absolute is that beyond which nothing greater can be thought, which means no form of conceptual thinking can approach the nature of the Absolute.[35] Whatever may verbally be said about the Absolute, it is not the actual truth,[36] in that whatever the intellect thinks about the Absolute is always in terms of space-time limitations. The Absolute, being beyond the space-time continuum, cannot be conceived by the intellect, because the intellect itself is the product of space-time bound causality.[37] It is inconceivable and inexpressible Absolute that is considered as the source and matrix of what we call phenomena. Although ineffable, the Absolute has to be defined through such terms that too are inconceivable, and that is why we speak of the Absolute as being infinite, eternal and indivisible. As the source of every manifest category, the Absolute accordingly is said to be everything. Although in everything, it transcends everything because of it being transcendent to everything.

Insofar as the ontology of Tantricism is concerned, it believes that the actual existence of everything, whether mundane or supramundane, is Śiva, who is God in its absoluteness.[38] Śiva as Absolute God is self-luminous, viz., light of consciousness. It is the luminous (*prakāśa*) aspect of the Absolute that is self-evident on account of the fact that consciousness reveals rather than conceals.[39] The revelatory nature of consciousness is reflected in the act of self-awareness of every

being that is conscious of itself, which means that one is conscious of oneself on account of the luminosity of consciousness. Being luminous, the light of consciousness thereby illumines everything that is manifest. A thing is manifest because of the luminosity of consciousness. If consciousness was not luminous, nothing would be manifest, or, should we say, everything would be enveloped by darkness. In such a situation nothing would be known, and so there would exist no possibility for knowledge of anything. Since such a situation of non-knowledge does not exist, it means that consciousness is of the nature of light—and the function of light is to reveal itself as well as what comes into its ambit. Since entities are manifest, so their existence is permeated by the presence of the revealing light of consciousness.[40] To shine and to make everything shine, is the nature of consciousness.[41] This kind of theistic non-dualism is also known as the *pratyakṣavāda*,[42] viz., a viewpoint that believes that the possibility of direct knowledge of the Absolute exist.

The other aspect of the Absolute is characterised by dynamism (*vimarśa*). It is such a functional aspect whereby the Absolute engages itself in the continuous manifestation of itself as the phenomena. It is this aspect of the Absolute that appears as the phenomena or what we call the categories of existence. Whatever there is in the manifest universe, it is the self-manifestation of the Absolute. Those who are perfect Yogīs realise and perceive everything in the universe as the Absolute.[43] They see the Absolute not only in the universe, but also beyond the phenomena, which establishes the fact that the Absolute as light is transcendent and as movement is immanent. The Absolute shines forth both as cosmos and, being the Absolute, beyond the cosmos. This twofold movement within the Absolute parallels the movement of emission and of withdrawal, of manifestation and dissolution. It is the dynamic aspect that is predominant when the Absolute emits out of itself the manifest categories of existence—and so accordingly this aspect reflects the immanent nature of the Absolute. When the Absolute as consciousness abides in itself, it denotes withdrawal, and it is through the process of withdrawal that the categories of existence dissolve into each other.

This aspect of the Absolute is called the transcendent one. The Absolute accordingly is termed as being both transcendent and immanent. The Absolute, when conceived as God, is endowed with the absolute powers of will, knowledge and action.[44]

The Absolute, while appearing as the phenomena, manifests itself in the waking, dreaming and sleeping states.[45] The Absolute, in the process of manifestation, does not suffer from any division or modification.[46] The Absolute is indivisible, eternal and changeless on account of it being light—and this aspect is termed as the static aspect of the Absolute. As the essence of light (*prakāśa*) is reflection (*vimarśa*), so the Absolute accordingly shines forth as God through the five cosmic powers of creation, preservation, absorption, obscuration and revelation. It is the aspect of reflection that enables us to have the understanding of the Absolute as God. The Absolute in its static aspect is referred to as Śiva, whereas in its dynamic aspect is spoken of as Śakti. Both these aspects of the Absolute form a single unity without causing any internal or external division. *Prakāśa* is the infinite light of the Absolute, whereas *vimarśa* is the creative activity of the I-consciousness as *prakāśa*. As a single unity, both the aspects together are called *saṃvid*, or absolute consciousness.

The Absolute while performing the cosmic activities is not dependent on something else other than itself. Whatever appears in the universe exists always potentially in the Absolute as consciousness (*saṃvid*).[47] Everything exists in the Absolute as an integral "I." The "I" must not be confused with the empirical ego. The "I" of the Absolute is its absolute I-consciousness. The "I" is, therefore, spoken of as being perfect in itself (*paripūrṇa*).

The universe, while existing as the pure "I" within the Absolute, is emitted by the Absolute as the "this" (*idaṃ*). In this way the Absolute appears as many entities with limited powers of knowledge and action. The creative activity of manifestation of the Absolute is termed as the creative sport (*līlā*) of the absolute Godhead. The Absolute, at the end of the creational period, reabsorbs the entire manifest creation into its subjectivity. Through absorption the non-liberated souls

are pushed into what is known as the realm of obscuration. When the Absolute reveals itself, it is called the revealing activity. The five cosmic activities constitute the essential nature of the Absolute.[48]

The Theory of Creation

The Tantric theory of creation has to be interpreted within the philosophical conceptual framework that understands the Absolute as God precisely because of having a sovereign will. The theory is, therefore, called the principle of absolute freedom or will (*svātantryavāda*). According to this theory, the creation emerges on account of the sovereign will of the Lord, viz., as and when the Lord wills the emergence of the manifest realm, it just occurs merely by willing. The theory maintains that God causes the emergence of the universe out of himself through his sportive will. Playfulness is the essential nature of the Lord. God, while giving rise to the categories of existence (*tattva*), does not depend for this activity on anything except upon himself. Every component of the universe exists in God as a potentiality. It is within God that everything exists as his very own self, viz., as an infinite and eternal "I." The "I" as consciousness vibrates within and without God. The Absolute as consciousness is not passive or inactive or motionless like space. Consciousness is characterised by an innate vibration or motion (*spanda*). Due to the stir within consciousness the Absolute thereby appears as Śiva (viz., God), Śakti (viz., the absolute Godhead), Sadāśiva (viz., God in a relative form when absorbed in the playfulness of diversity), Īśvara (viz., God in relation to cosmic functions), and Śuddhavidyā (viz., God in his revelatory aspect). These five cosmic functions of the Absolute as God are carried out through his sovereign will. Insofar as the manifestation of phenomena is concerned, it is a process of the Absolute in terms of which its essential nature gets obscured or concealed. The Absolute, as it were, becomes a limited being by atomising itself into phenomenal categories. Thus the Absolute, on the one hand, appears as a limited being and, on the other hand, as insentient element.[49] The insentient elements serve as substances for the manifestation of inanimate matter. The sentient beings, being

covered by the veil of *māyā*, are reduced to finitude, and accordingly are called atomic (*aṇu*) or finite bonded subjects (*paśu*). As a limited being, the bonded individual thinks of himself as a limited and finite being. Upon restricting the expanse of consciousness, he differentiates himself as distinct from other particulars, and thereby is unable to recognise himself as being essentially identical with the Absolute. It is the Lord (*Īśvara*)[50] that really is the cause of this phenomenal manifestation, which serves as a principle of concealment of the Absolute, and thereby becomes the cause of phenomenal diversity.

As a manifest category, the universe reflects God. This appearance of God through the universe is similar to the reflection in a mirror. The manifestation of the Absolute as the universe does not imply that the Absolute is transformed, for all practical purposes, into the universe. It is not a kind of transformation that we observe in the transformation of milk as curd. If such a transformation were to occur, then God would no more be God, because he would become subject to every kind of modification. The Tāntrikas assert that the manifestation of the Absolute as the universe in no manner alters the essential nature of the Absolute.[51] By virtue of the light of consciousness the entire creation is illumined. The elements of the universe shine in the Absolute as consciousness, and to shine as consciousness is their ultimate condition (*paramārtha-sattā*). As the elements are of phenomenal nature, they thus come within the ambit of what is called *ābhāsa*, viz., the categories of existence are of the nature of psychic light that shine in the lustre of the light of consciousness (*prakāśa*).[52]

The Nature of Spanda

The Tāntrikas, upon postulating the concept of *spanda* (vibration), wanted to assert that the Absolute is not a lifeless and impersonal Being, but has all the powers that establish its sovereign and free will . . . and it is the idea of *spanda* that makes the Absolute of Tantricism, in comparison to the passive (*śānta*) Absolute of Advaita Vedānta, dynamic and personal. Tantricism believes that the vibration or movement is an innate aspect of the Absolute, and this we discern when the sentient

beings engage themselves in such acts that involve knowing and doing.

The very nature of consciousness reflects its vibratory aspect, and this aspect of consciousness finds its expression through many kinds of psychophysical activities of finite beings. The activities that the consciousness of finite beings carries out should not be seen as the activities of pure consciousness because of the blissful nature of *spanda*. The blissful nature of *spanda* is realised in the state of enstasy (*samādhi*), which is transcendent to empirical consciousness, and so is equated to the state of revelation.

The term *spanda* is derived from the root *spadi*, "to move a little" (*kiṃcit-calanā*). As such, *spanda* is understood as a spontaneous spiritual activity of consciousness, which is realisable through certain yogic techniques that Tantricism has devised for its adherents. It means that *spanda* must always be shining forth in terms of I-consciousness. It is so because, unless there is movement within consciousness, there is no possibility for consciousness to either reflect upon itself or upon that that is outside it. The very act of reflection denotes that there is an "I" that engages in reflection. It is possible only if consciousness has movement. An immovable consciousness does not exist, because consciousness always is characterised by movement.

The Absolute is conceived as Śakti because of it being identical with *spanda*, which, while having constant rise and fall in the process of manifestation and withdrawal of creation, is considered as the fundamental cause of creation as well as for its dissolution. This twofold movement of consciousness is equated symbolically to the opening (*unmīlana*) and closing (*nimīlana*) of eyelids or to birth and death. The very idea of *spanda* has been described as being equivalent to *sphurattā* (twinkling), *ghūrṇī* (dizziness), *urmī* (wave), *matsyodarī* (fish-like throb when out of water), etc.[53]

The Nature of Bondage

What is bondage? What is its cause? These are some of the questions that are constitutive of Indian soteriology. It is the text of human bondage that has determined the soteriological

goal of each Indian religious tradition. The soteriological text consists of the assertion that an individual being in the world experiences, in one form or the other, suffering. There is suffering because of the very nature of phenomenal existence. Further it is also asserted that, insofar as a human being remains subject to spacetime laws, he will experience every kind of limitation—and the limitation can be of will, of knowledge or of action. In short, the individual being has the experience of curtailment of freedom—and this curtailment of freedom is called bondage. The question that arises is: Why does an individual experience the curtailment of freedom in the form of various kinds of limitations? The answer that is given is the following: it is because of ignorance. It all boils down to the fact that bondage is the other name of ignorance, which means that both of them are identical. This identity of the two can be expressed in this way: One is in bondage because of ignorance, and one is ignorant because of bondage.

When a Tāntrika speaks of ignorance, he does not mean by it complete non-knowledge (*na-jñāna*) or absence of knowledge.[54] The word ignorance (*a-jñānam*) must not be interpreted literally as the absence of knowledge (*na-jñānam*). The word ignorance has to be understood as that knowledge that is insufficient or incomplete (*apūrṇa-khyāti*). If ignorance is equated with complete absence of knowledge, then there is no possibility of having knowledge of any thing. Also it would be wrong to assume that ignorance is innate to human nature. That which is innate cannot at all be overcome. Since an individual has the possibility of having knowledge, so it means that ignorance is not innate to human nature. The identification of ignorance with incomplete knowledge means that an individual being has knowledge that is finite and limited. One of the consequences of finite knowledge is that that the individual being identifies himself with finite objects, such as the physical body or the senses. It is because of this that the individual speaks of himself as being thin, tall, fat, etc. On account of finite knowledge, doing and knowing of the individual, too, is finite. It is a knowledge that gives rise to limited self-consciousness. It is limited self-awareness that is termed as ignorance. The source of bondage, thus, is to be

traced to ignorance, which expresses itself in the identification of consciousness, which essentially is eternal, with finitude.

Ignorance, according to Tantricism, is of two kinds, namely, *pauruṣa* and *bauddha*.[55] The *pauruṣa* form of ignorance is an inherited one, and is characterised by such an awareness in terms of which one's self-identity is experienced within the frame of a limited horizon. And as a result of this the experience of eternity, as it were, becomes an impossibility.[56] The limited self-identity, caused by inherited ignorance, obstructs the awareness of the Infinite. The individual being has experience of his individuality as being restricted by the restrictive laws (*niyati*) of Nature. Insofar as intellectual (*bauddha*) ignorance is concerned, it expresses itself in terms of limited conceptual knowledge. A finite being, while living an embodied existence, develops or gives rise to space-time bound conceptions about himself, his nature and capacities. This limited conceptual knowledge results in the identification of the Self with this or that limited object. In other words, a person simply thinks of himself in terms of his limited ego, which signifies the reduction of the transcendent Self to the status of finite ego. As this form of ignorance is mainly conceptual, so it is called an ignorance that is intellectual. This form of ignorance, in short, is characterised by mental confusion in relation to one's essential nature.

Both forms of ignorance, viz., the inherited one and the intellectual one, are dependent upon each other, because one cannot be thought of apart from the other.[57] Both of them are responsible in leading an individual to such forms of experiences that are existentially very painful. Freedom from existential pain can be actualised only upon the eradication or uprooting of both forms of ignorance. Although the *guru* may destroy the inherited ignorance from his disciple, even then the mental confusion will continue to operate.[58] Tantricism, therefore, thinks that the uprooting of mental confusion will come about only when the path of Tantric praxis is followed with zeal and vigour. It is upon the elimination of both forms of ignorance that the individual comes to know one's essential nature as being non-different from the Absolute, and thereby is reached the soteriolgical goal of freedom from the cycle of

rebirth.

Insofar as forms of knowledge are concerned, they too are of two kinds, namely, inherited and intellectual. The perfect and correct knowledge is said to be that that has its source in mystical intuition or awarenss. Mere intellectual understanding is not considered as being perfect on account of it being conceptual.[59] The intuitive knowledge is always spontaneous and does not depend upon supports.[60] This form of knowledge emerges the moment melting away of individuality is experienced at the deepest level of being. It is a knowledge that results in the experience of consciousness as being pure and infinite (*saṃvid*). The experience of the Absolute as consciousness terminates in the experience of *jīvanmukti*, viz., in liberation while leading an embodied existence as well as in *videhamukti,* viz., disembodied liberation.[61]

It is the intuitive knowledge of the unity of Being, which is experienced as an undifferentiated mass of consciousness, that terminates in the soteric liberation from both the cycle of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) as well as from the existential pain of embodied existence. Ignorance, in contrast to the mystical knowledge of liberation, is seen as the basic cause of bondage.[62] According to Tantric thinking, an individual being which is microcosmic reflection of the macrocosm, is essentially identical with the Absolute, which means that there exists no essential difference between the Absolute and the individual. It is the recognition of this essential unity between the particular and the universal that is termed as liberation. Insofar as an individual experiences difference in any from, the chains of bondage bind him. The characteristic feature of bondage is that the individual existent takes the finite entities as the basis of the Self, or should we say, he identifies the Self with the body and such bodily features as, for example, fatness, thinness, tallness, etc. Such a limited view of the Self is the result of ignorance. To the extent an individual remains under the influence of ignorance, to that extent he will experience, in one form or the other bondage.

The question that may be asked at this juncture is: Why are there only few people among the masses who are enflamed by the desire for soteric liberation, viz., why is it that only

few seek liberation from bondage?

The question is quite logical and reasonable. The response to this question is twofold. It is in terms of the doctrine of karman and of divine grace (*anugraha*) of God. The doctrine of karman tells us that only they are predisposed towards liberation who have in previous existences performed such deeds as would result in the emergence of desire for liberation. It would mean that only they seek liberation whose previous deeds are such as would serve the basis for the arising of dispositions that are oriented towards liberation. The other reason for the arising of desire for liberation in some people is the direct intervention of God, and this intervention, theologically speaking, is called grace. Grace is seen as a gratuitous act of God.[63] It is the divine grace of God that directs an individual on the road to liberation. Both bondage and liberation are, according to Tantric thinking, considered as the two aspects of the same divine play of God. The Lord, while concealing his divine nature in the process manifesting himself as phenomena, appears as a limited being in bondage, a being that is in need of liberation.

The gracious activity of God has been accepted both in terms of sensual enjoyment (*bhukti*) and soteric liberation (*mukti*). Most of the world-renouncing religions think of sensual enjoyment as a hindrance in the path of liberation. The Tāntrikas, however, have a positve view insofar as the sensual pleasures are considered. For them the body is a temple of God, and so to deny oneself the pleasures of the body would mean of disrespecting God. Moreover, Tantricism does not suffer from body-spirit dualism. For them the body as well as spirit are a unity, and so should not be treated such entities that are opposed to each other. Also Tāntrikas think of the bodily pleasures as a foretaste of the bliss that is experienced upon realising the unity of Being in terms of the identity of microcosm and macrocosm. Thus, for a Tāntrika, every thing that is positive or that which affirms life should be considered as the direct outcome of divine grace of the Lord. Insofar as liberation is concerned, it can only be achieved through divine grace, because a limited individual does not have the capacity of reaching this state merely by self-effort. This liberative grace

of God can express itself through many forms, and one of them is through the person of Guru. The Absolute, as represented by Śiva and Śakti, is above the operations of *māyā*, and therefore the grace that is exercised by the Absolute as God leads to the attainment of worldly pleasures as well as to soteric liberation.[64]

The Tantric idea of grace does not at all entail the depreciation of self-effort. Nothing can be actualised apart from self-effort. However, self-effort in itself and by itself may not lead to the desired goal. The idea of divine grace has been postulated in order to overcome human limitations. Self-effort achieves its goal if favoured by divine grace. The fall of grace (*śaktipāta*) should be seen as an initial stir of self-effort, which, through repeated practice, gains the necessary momentum. And this momentum has to be maintained till the goal of liberation is reached. It is through the channel of grace that in an individual the desire for liberation is awakened, and, upon its maturity, the individual is directed to *guru* who imparts the necessary knowledge concerning the Absolute, its nature and its relation to the world. In addition to the impartation of theoretical knowledge, the *guru* initiates the seeker in the mysteries of Yoga. It is through the repeated practice of Yoga that the seeker reaches a stage whereby he is enabled to have the experience of the unity of Being. The *guru*, through the power of grace, cleanses the disciple from his inner and outer impurities. The *guru* does it either through the projection of the will or through initiation (*dīkṣā*). It is through the process of initiation that the *guru* frees his disciple from the effects of past karman, from all undesirable impressions (*saṃskāra*) and desires (*vāsanā*). Upon gaining freedom from the physical and mental drives the seeker thereby gains a position of strength, and accordingly has the experience of the Absolute as being identical with the Self.[65]

The Classification of Impurities

The Absolute as God, through the process of self-manifestation, appears as an impure and limited existent. Though pure in its basic nature and structure, the Absolute appears in its manifest form as if it were a limited and impure being. By virtue of its

own Godhead, the Absolute, while concealing its nature of absolute purity, manifests itself through a complex variety of limitations. It is the process of materialisation of God's free will of concealing himself that appears in the form of impurity (*mala*).[66]

The appearance of impurity, according to Tantricism, occurs through three stages, which means that the classification of the appearance of impurity is triadic. The initial appearance of impurity is spoken of as *āṇava-mala*, or the impurity that is finite. The term *aṇu* means atomic and so *āṇava-mala* is an impurity that pertains to a finite and limited being. *Āṇava-mala*, thus, is impurity of finiteness manifested by God as a finite individual. An existent that is under the influence of this impurity is said to be impure, although consciousness is essentially pure.[67] Any form of impurity can never stain the infinite and eternally pure consciousness. It is the appearance of this infinite consciousness as finite or limited consciousness that is spoken of as being impure. The finite consciousness shines in such a manner as if devoid of everything except of itself—and it is for this reason that it is equated to the void (*śūnya*).

Every manifest category essentially is identical with God. The essential unity of Being is recognised at the level of *vidyā*.[68] But due to *māyā*, God appears to be different from every manifest category. Difference between the finite subjects, between God and the world appears at the stage of *māyīya-mala*. It is the second kind of impurity. This impurity either manifests itself together with the *āṇava-mala* or separately.[69] The *āṇava-mala* is generally the base on which the structure of *māyīya-mala* is built.

The final stage of appearance of impurity occurs at the level of *kārma-mala*. It is an impurity that is dense and dark. It is the impurity that is given rise by the past deeds performed by the individual existent. It is on account of this impurity that the cycle of rebirths is put into motion.

The proccess of manifestation of categories of existence from Paramaśiva to the element earth has been bifurcated into what the Tāntrikas call pure creation (*śuddhādhvan*) and impure creation (*aśuddhādhvan*). The first five categories of existence,

viz., from the category of Paramaśiva to Śuddhavidyā, are said to be pure on account of them being beyond the operations of *māyā*. The categories of existence that are impure are from *māyā-tattva* down to earth. There is no sense of duality of any kind existing at the level of pure creation, which means that no form of impurity exists at this level. As a consequence of the non-existence of impurity at the level of pure creation, there is no awareness of duality of any kind, which means that no form of bondage exists. It is at the level of impure creation that there exists the sense of duality on account of the operations of *māyā*. It is due to the working of *māyā* that the beings of impure creation experience bondage. The experience of bondage among the existents of impure creation will persist to the extent impurities exist. It is on account of the impurities that the creatures of impure creation experience limitation, difference and ever-recurring cycle of rebirth. The sense of limitation is the result of *āṇava-mala*, whereas *māyīya-mala* gives rise to the sense of difference. Insofar as *kārma-mala* is concerned, it is the cause of rebirth of an individual existent.

Since impurity of every kind is the cause of human bondage, so the aim of Tantricism is to free an individual from the terrible impact of impurities by leading him through the Tantric praxis to the state of experience whereby their influence becomes inoperational. The transcendental state of consciousness is reached by eliminating, through the specific Tantric yogic methods, the functions of animation. It is on account of the principle of animation (*prāṇa*) that an animate entity is easily differentiated from an inanimate one. It is through the power of animation that all living organisms are alive, and so function as animate entities. The power of life-force works differently in different states of animation. For example, the function of animation is different in the state of waking from that of sleeping. Accordingly the functions of animation have been classified into five categories, namely, *prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna,* and *vyāna*. *Prāṇa*, and *apāna* are the two aspects of the life-force, and are to be found among all creatures.[70] Dissolution of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, viz., elimination and assimilation, into each other leads to the stage of *samāna*. At this

stage the state of consciounsess is equated to the state that occurs in sleep, which means that the *samāna* corresponds to the state of deep sleep or what is called *suṣupti*.[71] It is a state of rest, and it augments the energy of animation.[72] When the fourth stage of *udāna*, through the process of elimination and assimilation, is reached, we are at the level of experience where all forms of thought processes begin to disappear. It is a state of consciousness in which the mind gives up its activity of reflection, and the intellect stops the process of ratiocination. The I-ness shines forth in its effulgence. It is a stage of experience that corresponds to the mystical state called the Fourth (*turiya*). The Yogī has the experience of a fiery sensation rising through the gracious vein (*suṣumṇā*) towards the top of the head.[73] The next step is to reach the stage of *vyāna*. It leads to the highest mystical state. It terminates in the mystical state known as submergence (*samāveśa*). It is at this stage that a Yogī discovers himself to be identical with the Absolute, and therefore the experience is called the one that transcends the Fourth (*turiya-atīta*).[74] It is a state of absolute I-consciousness. It is by practising the method of elimination of life-force that a Yogī gets rid of impurities, and thereby reaches the ultimate soteric goal of liberation by experiencing complete identity with the Absolute.

The Nature of Liberation

The meaning of the term "liberation" becomes understandable in the context of bondage. It is upon experiencing bondage that an individual aspires for a state of freedom where no form of bondage or limitation would be experienced. The entire theological fulcrum of Tantricism, nay of entire Indian spirituality, is built upon these two concepts: Bondage versus Freedom.

Each one of us, in one way or the other, experiences bondage in terms of the curtailment of freedom. For a Tāntrika the root cause of this bondage is nothing else but ignorance. It is on account of ignorance that we superimpose the unreal upon the real as well the real upon the unreal. It is this misidentification of the real that results in the experience of bondage—and this bondage is experienced as existential pain or in terms

of difference or limitation. It would mean that the existential limitations and pain would persist till the time the causal links of bondage are not cut asunder. The sundering of the connecting links of causal chain of bondage is dependent to what degree ignorance is transcended. The eliminaton of ignorance, however, is itself dependent upon the eradication of impurities. The dawn of divine knowledge concerning the unity of Being is determined by the eradication of impurities, which is to say that elimination of impurities is equivalent to the overcoming of ignorance.

As and when a Tāntrika speaks of ignorance, he does not mean by it the absence of knowledge or the lack of information concerning the empirical facts of life. For a Tāntrika ignorance basically signifies imperfect knowledge in regard to one's essential nature. Accordingly ignorance has been identified with imperfect or erroneous knowledge. Erroneous knowledge is definitely knowledge, but it is knowledge that contains half-truths. In contrast to this imperfect knowledge, a Tāntrika desires to have perfect knowledge concerning his own-being. This knowledge of own-being must never be identified with the empirical knowledge concerning human nature. It is knowledge that is transcendent. It is upon the emergence of this mystical or transcendent knowledge that the causal links of the chain of bondage are broken, and as a consequence of this is experienced freedom from the pain and limitations that individuality entails. Freedom from this erroneous knowledge also means of gaining correct understanding concerning the Self, which also means that erroneous knowledge is transcended the moment correct understanding, based on the mystical intuition, emerges with regard to the essential nature of own-being.[75]

The way to right knowledge concerning the nature of one's own-being, according to Tāntrikas, lies in following the yogic methods that Tantricism has devised. The practice of Tantric Yoga leads to the state of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). It is a state whereby the practitioner recognises the essential nature of the Self as being eternal, free and one with the Absolute.[76] The one who reaches this state of mystical recognition of knowlege is referred to as liberated-while-alive (*jīvanmukta*).[77]

To be liberated while alive does not mean that such a person has completely freed himself from the fruits of his past actions (*prārabdha-karman*). He will have to exhaust all the fruits of his past deeds, and upon their exhaustion, he attains to what is called disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*) or liberation upon death.[78] At the end of his worldly life, the liberated-while-alive achieves perfect identity with the Absolute, and accordingly gains complete freedom from the cycle of rebirth, from existential pain, and from the experience of limitations of individuality.

There is, however, a higher state of liberation-while-alive, and that is known as submergence (*samāveśa*). It is an experience in which the Yogī has an unexpected experience of identity with the absloute I-consciousness. It is an experience in which empirical consciousness disappears into the cosmic I-consciousness. While being conscious of his own individual consciousness, the liberated-one experiences as if his particular consciousness is being transmuted into the absolute I-consciousness.[79] This experience enables the individual to have the recognition of the fact that his particular consciousness is not different from the absolute I-consciousness. It is upon attaining to this state that a Yogī realises all the occult powers (*siddhi*) that exist potentially in him. At the close of his worldly journey, two courses are open to a liberated-one: Either he allows himself to be completely submerged in I-consciousness or he takes a divine form like that of Bhairava. If he takes up the latter course, he thereby helps the Lord in conducting the divine sport of bondage and liberation in relation to the creatures in the world. Upon the completion of divine existence, the liberated-one returns to the primordial state whereby complete submergence in the absolute I-consciousness occurs.

The other course of liberation is sequential, viz., complete liberation is not instantaneous, but is reached in a graduated manner. Accordingly this form of liberation has been spoken of as being sequential (*kramamukti*). It is a kind of liberation that emerges on account of divine grace. The divine grace is not so intense as to result in immediate liberation. While practising Yoga, the Yogī does not easily develop such possibilites as would enable him to eradicate the very roots of

impurity. The Yogī of this path, upon death, reaches some kind of divine abode where he is helped towards further progress by the presiding deity of the realm. The individual practitioner, step by step, moves to different but higher divine abodes, and ultimately reaches the state whereby perfect identity with the absolute I-consciousness is realised. This concept of sequential liberation has parallel in the concept of eastern paradise of Pure Land Buddhism. The Pure Land Buddhists believe that the believers in Amitābha have the possiblity, upon death, of entering his realm, which is known as the Western Paradise. When in Paradise, they are so helped by Amitābha as to lead them to final emancipation (*nirvāṇa*). This devotional form of Buddhism, known as the Pure Land, is quite popular in China and Japan.

Tantric Praxis

Before we take the Tantric methods of liberation for consideration, let us, before anything else, try to understand such essential components of Tantricism that form the base of Tantric praxis (*sādhanā*). The most essential components of Tantric praxis consist of *mantra, yantra, mudrā, bhūta-śuddhi, nyāsa,* and meditational visualisation. It is only by understanding the significance of each component of Tantric praxis that a proper evaluation of Tantric methods of liberation can be made.

Mantra: Mantra is the heart and pulse of Tantric praxis. It is a technique that supplies the necessary amount of blood to all such veins that bring Tantric praxis to its proper fructification. The term *mantra* is derived from the root *man,* "to reflect." By adding suffix *tra* to the term, the meaning that is derived thereby is soteriological, in that the term signifies "deliverance" or "salvation." Thus the term has been interpreted as a "means of liberation through the power of thought." It is this understanding of mantra that has made its meaning all the more important. Since no equivalent word is to be found in any European language, the term usually has been translated as denoting sacred syllables or formula.

In order to understand and appreciate the significance of the term *mantra* in Tantricism, it is necessary that we pay some

attention to its historical development. To begin with: A mantra may be said to be composed of a phoneme or a series of phonemes. A mantra has significance and meaning only if a qualified *guru* transmits it to a disciple at the time of initiation (*dīkṣā*). A mantra has no significance or value outside the initiatory or sacred structure. In other words, it means that a mantra is energetic only if received from a qualified *guru*—and the *guru*, by energising the mantra, transmits it to the disciple at the time of initiation. It is the initiatory character of the mantra that makes its character numinous, and thereby the repository of transcendental power. A mantra, thus, may by seen as the repository of divine revelation that is transcendental and which is not available to those who are non-initiates.[80]

Tantricism did not by itself bestow the divine character upon the mantra. It has a background and a history. The mystical formulas (*mantra*) had a definite function in the Vedic sacrifice, and the Vedic religion was mainly characterised by such sacrifices that were considered functional and efficacious. The Vedic people believed that the mystical words, once uttered, establish or actualise realities which the words supposedly represent. In a manner of speech, the mystical words are supposed to be the expression of realities which they represent.[81] When a particular mystical formula is uttered, the very utterance of the mystical formula during the performance of sacrifice establishes the identity of the divinity or reality that the mystical formula embodies. However, only the Brāhmaṇa priest can utter the Vedic mystical formulas. In the case of Tantricism, it is the *guru*, instead of a priest, who alone is qualified to transmit the mystical formula to the disciple.

As the mantra in both the Vedic religion and Tantricism is seen as the main vehicle or means of knowing intuitively or realising the transcendent, so the Absolute, particularly in Tantricism, has been equated with the Silent Word (*śabda* = *logos*). This view of the Absolute as Word has given rise to the belief that the mantra is nothing but the manifest form of the Absolute as *śabda-brahman*. This idea of the Absolute as the Silent Sound (*anāhata-nāda*) will play a very significant role in Tantric meditation. This idea of the Absolute as Silent Sound

or unarticulated Word is given further push by maintaining that the source of all uttered sounds is the Silent Sound, which is the Absolute. It is, thus, the Silent Sound, in the form of words (*śabda-rāśi*), which, on the one hand, gives birth to the articulated sounds and, on the other hand, makes known to us all the differentiated objects (*artha*). The emergence of articulate sounds within the Absolute has four distinct stages of manifestation—and these stages are the following.

1. *Parā-vāk* represents the Transcendental, and thereby the undifferentiated, state of the Absolute as Word. There is, at this stage, complete unity between the Word as Silent Sound and the Absolute.
2. *Paśyanti-vāk* is the stage of Seeing, and so in it an unintended kind of activity is involved. It is a stage in which the Silent Sound, for the first time, begins to express itself in terms of indistinct image or idea.
3. *Madhyamā-vāk* or the Middling is the stage in which the Sound begins to manifest itself in the form of reflection or thought.
4. *Vaikharī-vāk* is the stage of Gross Speech, viz., of sound that is articulated. What it amounts to saying is that the Silent Sound now manifests itself as the spoken speech, and it is spoken speech that is constitutive of language.

Corresponding to these four stages of manifestation of the Absolute as Silent Sound, there is a simultaneous manifestation of the Absolute through its Śakti aspect. The stages are:

1. *Parā-śakti* represents that state of Śakti of the Absolute that is considered as a mass of potentiality. It is, in its atomic form, represented by the *kuṇḍalinī* in the root-wheel (*mūlādhāra-cakra*), which is situated at the base of the rectum.
2. *Paśyanti-śakti* is that aspect of Śakti that manifests itself as the creative pulsation of the Absolute, and is represented by the self-existent wheel (*svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra*), which is the second mystical wheel of energy.

3. *Madhyamā-śakti* is a stage of manifestation whereby Śakti makes itself manifest in the from of subtle evolutes of Nature (*prakṛti*) and is represented by the wheel of the city of jewels (*maṇipūra-cakra*).
4. *Vaikharī-śakti* is such a stage of manifestation of Śakti that is gross, and so represents materiality as such. It is at this stage that the Absolute, through its creative energy (*śakti*), becomes the gross universe. It is the mystical wheel of the silent sound (*anāhata-cakra*) that represents this aspect of manifestation.

It is erroneous to maintain that the mystical formulas are mainly used for the attainment of occult powers. It cannot be denied that there are some Tāntrikas whose main goal in life is to attain occult powers with the intention of enjoying life to the fullest. Tantricism does not, however, reject the legitimate enjoyment. The acceptance of enjoyment as a legitimate pursuit does not mean that the mystical formulas have been used only for the prupose of obtaining occult powers. The main purpose of mantras is to effect transformation of consciousness, viz., mantras are used as a means for altering the states of consciousness, that is to say, for internalising consciousness to the extent that its external relationships are completely cut asunder. The process of internalisation of consciousness is achieved through such yogic methods that turn consciousness inwards by delinking it from speech and thought and by not allowing the senses to relate themselves to their corresponding objects. The rupture between consciousness, speech and thought is realised by developing concentration through the vocal and mental repetition of the mantra. It is through the utterance of the mantra that the power of the deity is invoked. This invoking of power of the deity is a process of meditation wherby the meditator gains indentity with the deity (*devatā*) of the mantra. In this manner the empirical aspect of consciousness, as it were, is abolished during the time of meditation. By repeating this method, the Yogī is supposed to achieve freedom from the restrictions of time by transcending the conventional modes of uttered speech.A

conventional mode of speech occurs in spacetime structure. A Yogī also transcends time by delinking consciousness from the rhythms of speech in terms of which time is measured.

The belief that a mystical formula is the container of divinity is responsible in giving rise to the notion of seed-formula (*bīja-mantra*).[82] The content of the seed-formula is so concentrated and minimal that the entirety of a sacred text oftentimes is reduced to a single syllable or word. The seed-formula, thus, should be seen as an abbreviation of a compound formula. Each divine manifestation of a deity has a mantra; but the most celebrated seed-formula is *Oṃ*. This seed-formula is supposed to represent all the sounds of the cosmos, and thereby the entirety of reality.[83] Thus we have such seed-formulas as, for example, *krīṃ* (symbolising Kālī), *raṃ* (symbolising Agni), etc. Each wheel of energy (*cakra*) in the body has its own seed-formula, and they are:

1. *Mūlādhāra-cakra* has *oṃ* as its seed-formula.
2. *Svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra* has *vaṃ* as its seed-formula.
3. *Maṇipūra-cakra* has *raṃ* as its seed-formula.
4. *Anāhata-cakra* has *yaṃ* as its seed-formula.
5. *Viśuddha-cakra* has *haṃ* as its seed-formula.
6. *Ājñā-cakra* has *oṃ* as its seed-formula.

A mantra may be said to represent such a process of meditation whereby the meditator is enabled or empowered to project that which is contained within the mantra. The offerings offered in a sacrifice become efficacious only when they are projected through the invocation of a mantra. While projecting the offerings that are offered in a sacrifice through a mantra, it is essential to bring about, through meditation on the mystical formula, synchronisation between breath, body and consciousness.[84]

The ritualised technique that is used for the purpose of projecting the mystical power is called *nyāsa*. *Nyāsa* is a ritual process of projection wherby the divine powers are both invoked and established in the various parts of the body. The practitioner meditates on that divinity which he wants to appropriate. The process of appropriation of the divinity takes

place through the recitation of the mystical formula by touching the various parts of the body, so that divine powers are established at points where they are desired.

A mantra also functions as an aid or support for concentration. The mystical formula discloses its meaning to the one who has been initiated, and the meaning is revealed only during the process of meditation. A mantra does not convey the meaning of the concepts of day-to-day experiences.[85] Since most of the mystical formulas do not have any lexical meaning, so they are accordingly said to belong to the twilight zone of ambiguity that confers meaning on the mantric constructs.

Yantra: A *yantra* or a *maṇḍala* functions as an aid to visualisation (*dhyāna*) in the complex system of Tantric meditation. A Tantric practitioner is asked, when in meditation, to be so prepared as to be able to project mentally the images of deities by making use of the technique of visualisation—and this he does through the medium of a *yantra* or a *maṇḍala*. In other words, it is through the means of a *yantra* that a Yogī visualises the mental images he has of deities. The very word *yantra* is derived from the root *yaṃ*, "to hold," "to sustain." The suffix *tra* denotes its instrumentality. A *yantra*, thus, is understood in terms of a vehicle of a deity that is to be invoked.

In esoteric language a *yantra* is a cosmogram as well as a psychogram. It represents a mystical map of the primary structure of the cosmos. It visualises a cosmic scheme of manifestation, in a simple geometric design, of the One into the Many. A *yantra* consists of a diagram that is either drawn or engraved on a piece of metal, wood, stone, etc. A *Śrīyantra*, for example, consists of nine triangles, five apexes up and four apexes down. The triangles are enclosed by a number of concentric circles in the shape of squares. It has four doors, representing the four quarters or directions. The triangles that point downward represent Śakti, the principle of femininity, whereas the upward ones represent Śiva, the principle of masculinity. The dot (*bindu*) in the middle is the symbol of the Absolute, thereby transcending both Śiva and Śakti. A *yantra*, therefore, represents the scheme of cosmic manifestation of

the Absolute. The simplest *yantra* is represented by a triangle downwards (Śakti) and a triangle upwards (Śiva). As far as the circle, the lotus petals in the square and the point are concerned, they are the symbols of the world axis.

It is geometrical design of a *yantra* that the Yogī internalises mentally through the process of meditative visualisation. A *yantra* is visualised either from inside or from the centre of the dot (*bindu*) outward or from the outward circumference towards the centre. The former represents the process of macrocosmic manifestation, whereas the latter represents the process of involution of the manifest. Both these conditions of manifestation (*prasāra, vikāsa*) and withdrawal (*saṃkoca, laya*) are spoken of as being equivalent to the opening (*unmīlana*) and closing (*nimīlana*) of the eyelids of a Yogī when in the state of enstasy (*samādhi*).

A Yogī begins the process of elimination of that that pertains to the external world the moment he has successfully internalised the *yantra.* The Yogī does not lose the lucidity of awareness that comes to him during the process of meditation. A Yogī, while in meditation, realises complete identity with the *yantra.* The process of elimination through the visualisation of a *yantra* connotes the dissolution of the Yogī as an experiencing subject. It is through the process of self-dis-solution that a Yogī reaches the summit of mystical experience, which is characterised by the absence of distinction of subject and object.[86]

A variant of a *yantra* is *maṇḍala.* The function of a *maṇḍala* is the same as that of a *yantra.* A *maṇḍala,* however, is more complex in its design than a *yantra.* It is mainly used by the Buddhist Tāntrikas.

The border of a *maṇḍala* represents the "barrier of fire." The "barrier of fire" signifies that the non-initiates in the Tantric lore cannot have access to a *maṇḍala.* Those who have access to it, viz., the initiates, get their ignorance "burnt up." After the border is the circle, which is referred to as "the circle of diamonds." A "diamond," within the Buddhist Tantric ideology, represents the highest mystical state of consciousness, which is as firm and effulgent as is a diamond. Within this circle is an another circle around which are eight

cemeteries, representing thereby the eight degraded forms of empirical consciousness. Then we come across a ring of leaves, and this ring of leaves symbolises the renewal of consciousness, which in practical terms means spiritual regeneration. In the centre of the last circle we have a proper *maṇḍala*, viz., the place where the divine forces are located.

The ritual process of drawing a *maṇḍala* is very complex. The ground on which a *maṇḍala* is drawn has to be purified ritually. After the ritual purification, the *maṇḍala* is drawn with two white cords. Upon having drawn the *maṇḍala*, the practising Yogī is initiated on an auspicious day in the technique of meditation concerning *maṇḍala*. The process of initiation itself is a complex affair. It is only through initiation that the practitioner is able to enter mentally a *maṇḍala*. The entrance into a *maṇḍala* connotes that the disciple is located in a sacred space. While meditating, the disciple experiences the periodic manifestation and dissolution of the universe. The Yogī, in this manner, destroys the chain of rebirth, and thereby gains access to the transcendent state of the unity of Being.[87]

Mudrā: The term *mudrā* has a variety of meanings in Tantricism. The term *mudrā*, in the context of a Tantric ritual, denotes both the parched grain as well as a women. As parched grain, it is one of the five prohibited items that is used in a special Tantric ritual. The term also means a gesture, and as such indicates such postures that a Yogī makes during worship or ritual.[88]

The function of a *mudrā* is, more or less, the same as that of a mantra. A mantra remains inefficacious if it is not accompanied by a proper hand gesture (*mudrā*). It is mantra, *dhyāna* and *mudrā* that bestow perfection upon the Tantric practice.[89] According to Abhinavagupta, the term *mudrā* is derived from the roots *mud* (to delight) and *ra* (to yield). The interpretation that is given to the term would imply that the Yogī achieves mental repose by uniting himself with the Self through *mudrā*. A *mudrā* may be said to be a physical representation of a mantra. As such, the Yogī, while performing gestures, activates his mind, speech and body. This activation of mind, body and speech denotes the three different ways of realising the Self.

Bhūta-śuddhi: The *bhūta-śuddhi* (the ritual purification of elements) basically concerns itself with the inner purification of the Yogī. It is through this ritualised purification that a Yogī consecrates his body through the use of *nyāsa*, viz., through spiritual transformation. The ritual begins by offering worship to one's *guru.* Then the Yogī enters into his inner world whereby, through intense concentration and imagination, he visualises all such realities that make up his being. After this the Yogī within himself envisages the cosmic manifestation as well as its dissolution. While visualising the process of dissolution, the Yogī follows the process of dissolution of each element into its preceding cause. He reaches a state where the entire cosmic manifestation is dissolved into its ultimate source. In likemanner he follows the process of manifestation. Through this inward manifestation and dissolution the Yogī burns away, in the heat of cosmic fire, whatever limitations and imperfections he may be having as an existent. A Yogī, thus, attains the state of transparent purity. Being pure, he experiences the joy and bliss of the transcendental state. It is upon the attainment of the transcendental state that the Yogī remains submerged in the Absolute.[90]

Nyāsa: Upon realising the mental and physical purification through the ritual purification of elements, the Yogī thereby prepares himself for a state of spiritual elevation whereby he is able to infuse his mind-body complex with the life-force of the divinity he worships. The process or the method of infusing mind-body with the energy of the deity is called *nyāsa.*[91] The purpose of the infusion is that the Yogī looks at his mind-body as the centre where the entire cosmos is established. It is through the ritual of *nyāsa* that the Yogī gains such necessary powers whereby he is enabled to establish all the deities, garland of letters (*mātrikā*), mantras, seers, etc., in the mind-body complex. Every act of touching the body (*nyāsa*) is accompanied by the utterance of a mantra. While uttering the seed-formula of the deity, the Yogī thereby envisages the actual place of the body where the deity has to be established. When the performance of the ritual of *nyāsa* comes to an end, the Yogī, through intense concentration, has the experience as if

having been placed in the divine realm of the Goddess.[92] At the same time the Yogī experiences the divine presence of the Goddess in the heart.[93]

The aim of the ritual-oriented methods is to prepare the Yogī to visualise mentally the divine images on the screen of the mind.[94] The images that are visualised mentally may be inconceivable on account of them being divine, yet their presence permeates the phenomena. It is these mental images of the divinities that are assimilated or appropriated by the Yogī by employing the various ritually oriented techniques.[95] In other words, it means that one has to transport oneself, through these techniques, inwardly to the realm that the deity represents or embodies. Once being mentally in the realm of the deity, the Yogī thereby is in a position of appropriating the deity through the divine energy that lies within. It is only upon appropriating the deity that the Yogī becomes the deity, which establishes the Tantric maxim: Unless one becomes the deity one cannot worship the deity (*na devo devaṃ arcayet*). It is upon experiencing perfect identity with the deity that there takes place the arousal of divine energies within the Yogī. This identification with the deity should not be treated as an exercise in mere abstract thought; it is an experiential truth for a Tāntrika.

Tantric Physiology

One of the claims of Tantricism is that the reality of man must not be restricted to the tangible or to that which we perceive or experience through the senses. There is a dimension in the life of an individual that is beyond the sight or beyond the experience of the senses. In other words, it means that the tangible aspect of an individual existent is simply what belongs to the surface. There is a dimension of life that is characterised by depth, and so that which has depth must also have a surface. If so, it denotes that the structure of the manifest realm is so organised as to lead to its stratification. In the context of man the body represents this hierarchical stratification as an outer shell and the mind as the invisible interior. As the entirety of reality is stratified, its highest point is referred to as the Absolute. To comprehend the hierarchical

nature of reality, it is necessary that we analyse the complex relationship that occurs between the mind and the body.[96]

Fundamental to Tantric thinking is that both the mind and the body are the different forms or expressions of manifestation of one and the same reality. The structure of manifestation of reality is hierarchical in orientation. Insofar as man's psychophysical content is concerned, it is so structured as to lead to the emergence of esoteric theory of five sheaths or coverings (*pañca-kośa, pañca-kañcuka*). The earliest Upaniṣad in which the theory of five sheaths is adumbrated, is the *Taittirīya*.[97] Each sheath or covering has a corresponding objective environment. In the Tantric lore this correspondence is made use of to fill up both the religious and philosophical gaps that dualistic thinking gives rise to. It is a correspondence that maintains that the microcosm parallels the macrocosm. The purpose of this equation between the two, viz., between the macrocosm and the microcosm, is to establish essential idenity between the two, which in Tantric language denots that the *piṇḍa-aṇḍa* (microcosm) is equal to *brahma-aṇḍa* (macrocosm). Reality in itself, however, is without any physical form as well as is free from mental processes on account of it being transcendent.

The less gross a sheath is, the more refined and subtle it is in its composition and texture. Each sheath, like the outer physical sheath, has definite or specific structure. It has been the endeavour of both Tantricism and Haṭhayoga to envisage the structure of each subtle body or sheath. It is, however, true to say that the subtle sheaths or bodies do not possess the same amount of objectivity as the physical one. But it would also be wrong to say that they are mere fictions. What we have to do concerning the reality of the subtle bodies is to look at them from the perspective of a Yogī who experiences or has vision of them during deep meditative introspection or abstraction.

Prāṇa: Each form of the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), within the Tantric perspective, is characterised by a psychophysical complex. The subtle body is said to be consisting of dynamic forces or energies. The link between the physical body and the subtle body takes place through the process of penetration,

and through penetration the preservation of the physical body is made possible. It is *prāṇa* or the life-force that forms the necessary link between the mind and the body. In its universal dimension the life-force is centered in the subtle body where it takes up the five functions of the body in the following order:

1. *Prāṇa* is the embodiment of such a process whereby the life-force is drawn into the physical body in terms of inhalation.
2. *Apāna* signifies that process of the body whereby the inhaled breath, in the form of exhalation, is taken out of the body.
3. *Vyāna* represents that function of the life-force whereby it is made to circulate through the body.
4. *Samāna* is that function of the life-force in terms of which assimilation or digestion of food is accomplished.
5. *Udāna* is that function of the life-force that allows the emergence of speech to occur.

The Channels: According to the esoteric Tantric physiology, it is believed that the human body contains nearly 72,000 veins (*nāḍī*).[98] Once the life-force is established in the body, it circulates within the body through these numerous veins. The most important channels or veins are the *iḍā, piṅgalā* and *suṣumṇā*.[99] Insofar as the location of the gracious vein is concerned, it is located along the axis of the body (viz., of the spinal cord), and so accordingly has been homologised with the *axis mundi* or Mount Meru. There is another channel located within the gracious vein, which is known as the diamond vein (*vajranī-nāḍī*). Within the diamond vein is located the *citrinī-nāḍī* or the *brahma-nāḍī*. The gracious vein is very delicate in texture and composition, and so is said to be as thin as a thousandth part of a hair. When the coiled snake (*kuṇḍalinī*) is aroused, it goes up through the gracious vein towards the centre of the crown that is located in the head.

Insofar as the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* veins are concerned, they have been envisioned as having twisted themselves around the gracious vein on the left and right sides respectively. These two channels—*iḍā* and *piṅgalā*—are extended, so is the belief

of Tāntrikas, upto the forehead, and from this places they go down to the nostrils. The *iḍā* represents the moon, whereas the *piṅgalā* is the symbol of the sun.[100] It is between the two eyebrows where the two channels meet the gracious vein, and the place between the eyebrows is esoterically called as that of command wheel (*ājñā-cakra*). The meeting of the three channels, viz., of *suṣumṇā*, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, at the place called command wheel terminates in the formation of a knot (*granthi*), and accordingly is spoken of as *triveṇī*, viz., the triadic conjunction. It is in the sexual region from where the channels originate. The actual place of origin of the channels is believed to be two fingers above the anus and two fingers below the penis. The breadth of the place of origin of these channels is as much as is that four fingers.

It is through these two channels, viz., *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, that the life-force (*prāṇa*) ascends and descends, which corresponds to exhalation and inhalation. It is this dyadic movement of ascent and descent, of inhalation and exhalation of the life-force that a Yogī, through the practice of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) desires to control. The Yogī, by attempting to block the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* forces the life-force into the gracious vein. Once the life-force is forced into the gracious vein, the arousal of the coiled snake is bound to occur, and it is the arousal of this latent energy called *kuṇḍalinī* that leads Tantric praxis to a successful conclusion, which is to experience the unending celebration of the soteric bliss.

The Mystical Wheels of Energy: The subtle body is not simply composed of the numerous channels, but also is in possession of such centres of the life-force that are known to the Tāntrikas as the mystical wheels of energy (*cakra*) or lotuses (*padma*).[101] The number of the wheels of energy of subtle body is said to be six. There is also a seventh wheel of energy, namely, the *sutura frontalis*. The following are the mystical wheels of energy:

1. *The mūlādhāra-cakra:* This wheel of energy is the basic centre of the life-force and accordingly is called the root-centre. If translated literally, the term means "the root-support." It is located in the region of perineum. It is in

this wheel in which the cosmic energy, in the form of the coiled snake (*kuṇḍalinī*), lies in the state of latency. This cosmic energy lies at this wheel in such a position as would make it to block the opening of the gracious vein. The shape of this wheel of energy is in the form of a lotus with four petals. The letters *v, ś, ṣ, s* are written on the petals. There is a yellow square in the middle of the lotus that is representative of the element earth (*pṛthivī*). There is also a triangle in the centre of the square with apex downward. The triangle represents the female sexual organ (*yoni*). In the centre of the triangle is a phallus (*liṅga*) called self-existent phallus (*svayambhū-liṅga*). The coiled serpent (*kuṇḍalinī*), by coiling herself around the phallus, blocks the opening of the phallus. Being dormant, the *kuṇḍalinī* thereby blocks "the door to the Absolute" (*brahma-dvāra*).

2. *The svādhṣiṭhāna-cakra* or the self-supporting wheel of energy is, according to Tantric belief, situated in the region of the genitals. The shape of this wheel is like that of a lotus and the petals of it are of the colour of vermilion, and the letters that are written on the petals are the *b, bh, m, r, l.* There is a white half-moon in the middle of the lotus, which is mystically related to Varuna. There is a seed-formula in the middle of the moon, and in the centre of the seed-formula is Viṣṇu who is attended by the Goddess Cāknī. This wheel of energy is the symbol of the element water, white colour, the inhaled breath, the hand, and so on.
3. *The maṇipūra-cakra* or the wheel of the city of jewels. The location of this wheel is around the region of the navel. Its lotus is blue in colour and has ten petals with letters *d, dh, n, t, th, d, dh, n, p,* and *ph.* There is a red traingle in the middle of the lotus, and on the triangle is the God Mahārudra. The God is on a bull and is attended by the Goddess Lākinī Śakti, who is of blue colour. The wheel is the symbol of the element fire.
4. *The anāhata-cakra* or the wheel of unstruck sound. The location of this mystical wheel is in the region of the heart, which is considered by the Tāntrikas as the centre

of life-force (*prāṇa*) as well as of the principle of individuation (*jīvātman*). The lotus of this wheel is of red colour, and has twelve golden petals with letters *k, kh, g, gh,* and so on. There are two interlaced triangles in the middle of the lotus, and in the centre of them is another golden triangle enclosing a dazzling phallus. The God Īśvara is above the two traingles with the Goddess Kākinī Śakti, who is of red colour. This wheel is the symbol of the element air.

5. *The viśuddha-cakra* or the wheel of purity. The location of this wheel is in the throat. The throat region is considered as the location of the breath called *udāna*. The lotus of this wheel is of smoky purple colour, and has sixteen petals with letters *a, ā, l, ḷ, u, ū,* etc. There is a blue area within the lotus, and in the middle of it is a white circle in which is an elephant. The seed-formula *haṅg* is written on the animal. The animal also supports God Sadāśiva, who is half of silver colour and half of golden colour. The God, seated on the bull, holds many objects in his various arms. The Goddess Sadā Gaurī, who has ten arms and five faces, represents one-half of the body of God Sadāśiva. The wheel represents the element ether.
6. *The ājñā-cakra* or the command wheel. The location of the command wheel is between the two eyebrows. The lotus of this wheel is of white colour, and has two petals with letters *h* and *kṣ*. It is the centre of cognitive faculties like intelligence, ego and mind. It also is the centre of the senses in their subtle aspect. There is a white triangle in the lotus. The apex of the triangle is downward, and in the centre of it is a white phallus, known as "the other" (*itara*). It is the seat of God Paramaśiva. The seed-formula of the wheel is *Oṃ*. The Goddess of the wheel is Hākinī, who has six faces and six arms, and is seated on a white lotus.
7. *The sahasrāra-cakra* or the wheel of thousand petals. The location of this wheel is at the crown of the head. This wheel is also known by such names as *brahmasthāna, brahmarandhra, nirvāṇa,* etc. The lotus petals of this

transcendental centre contain all the speech sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet. There is a full moon in the middle of the lotus. The moon is seen to be enclosing the triangle. It is at this wheel where the final union (*unmani*) of Śiva and Śakti takes place. It is in the union of the Divine Couple that the purpose of Tantric praxis is served. It is after traversing the six wheels that the coiled serpent (*kuṇḍalinī*) ends her journey.

Kuṇḍalinī: The most important and revolutionary concept in Tantricism is that of *kuṇḍalinī*.[102] The concept of *kuṇḍalinī*, as adumbrated by the Tāntrikas, has to be understood in the context of their theory of phenomenal manifestation. The phenomenal manifestation occurs on account of the innate energy of the Absolute, and this energy is nothing else but the *kuṇḍalinī* in her individualised form. When the Absolute reduces itself to the level of objects, it thereby, as it were, empties itself of its divinity. It is in the process of the atomisation of the Absolute that the *kuṇḍalinī*, viz., the energy aspect of the Absolute, itself becomes atomic. In its atomic condition the *kuṇḍalinī*, as it were, is separated from the Absolute. In its atomic condition, it remains dormant or latent in the form of a sleeping snake at the *mūlādhāra-cakra*. The aim, thus, is to reunite the *kuṇḍalinī* with the Absolute by awakening her from her sleep through specific yogic methods of breath-control. Once united, the individual practitioner thereby attains to the state of liberation. The *Gorakṣa-saṃhitā*[103] has described *kuṇḍalinī* thus:

> The serpent power, forming an eightfold coil above the bulb (*kanda* is the center of all the subtle channels), remains there all the while covering with its face the opening door to the Absolute (viz., the gracious vein, namely, the *suṣumṇā*). Through that door the safe door to the Absolute is reached. Covering with the face that door, the great Goddess is asleep (in the ordinary human being). Awakened through *buddhi-yoga* together with (the combined action of) mind and wind (viz., the life-force), She rises upwards through the *suṣumṇā* like thread and needle.
>
> Sleeping in the form of a serpent, resembling a resplendent cord, She, when awakened by the Yoga of Fire (viz., *buddhi-yoga*), rises upwards

through the *suṣumṇā*.
Just as one may open a door with a key by force, so should the Yogī open the door to emancipation with *kuṇḍalinī*.

The Yogī succeeds in arousing the *kuṇḍalinī* from her sleep in the *mūlādhāra* when he efficiently blocks the ascent and descent of the life-force through *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*. The Yogī through the practice of breath-control accomplishes the blocking of the life-force. By blocking the ascent and descent of the life-force, the Yogī thereby forces the life-force into the gracious vein. In this manner the dormant *kuṇḍalinī* is aroused from her sleep. The activation of the *kuṇḍalinī* leads to such a kind of heating up that may be compared to the atomic explosion. With the increase of heat, there is an internal mechanism by the release of which the *kuṇḍalinī* goes upwards. The going up of the *kuṇḍalinī* is similar to a lightning flash. Once the *kuṇḍalinī* goes up, it immediately reaches the centre at the crown of the head. The experience that results from it is called the reunion of the individualised cosmic energy (Śakti) with the transcendental consciousness represented by Śiva. In symbolic terms, the union is compared to the sacred marriage of the Divine Couple, namely, Śiva and Śakti. The Tāntrikas maintain that the experience of union of Śiva and Śakti not only emancipates the Yogī from the clutches of the cycle of rebirth, but also enables him to experience pleasure (*bhukti*) at the level of the body.

The Methods of Liberation

Basic to Tantric system of thought is the conviction that the individual existent in the world is in bondage, which upon elaboration is interpreted to mean that an individual existent is tethered to the becoming process, viz., to the cycle of rebirth, due to the three main impurities (*mala*)—and the impurities are the *āṇava-mala* (impurity of atomic condition), *māyīya-mala* (impurity of differentation), and *kārma-mala* (causal impurity). Insofar as these three impurities, jointly or individually, are operational, the individual existent will continue to be in bondage. It is upon the removal of impurities, which is accomplished through the practice of Tantric praxis, that there dawns

intuitive knowledge in terms of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) concerning one's essential nature (*svarūpa, svabhāva*) as being non-different from the Absolute. It is recognised that the so-called limited self is not so limited as one experiences it during the period of metaphysical ignorance, which is equivalent to saying that the essential nature remains unrecognised on account of impurities. The recognition of the essential nature of the Self lies in the fact that, upon the emergence of intuitive gnosis, the sense of difference completely disappears. Instead of difference, the individual experiences unity of Being, which means that the individual self is recognised as identical with the Absolute. The knowledge of identity through recognition occurs when the impurities, through the descent of divine grace (*śaktipāta*),[104] are got rid of. It is divine grace that uplifts an individual from the pit of becoming-pain by removing the veils of impurities that are responsible in concealing the luminous nature of the Self.

The methods of liberation, according to Tantricism, are three, and they are *āṇava-upāya, śākta-upāya* and *śāmbhava-upāya*. There is however a fourth method too, which is that of *aṇu-upāya*. This method is considered to be no method on account of it being free from mental or physical exertion. The first two methods or ways are considered to be somewhat inferior when compared to the last two methods. The first two methods are thought to be inferior on account of their failure of leading to the immediate removal of impurities. The progress is slow and is constituted by steps. The sense of differentiation (*vikalpa*) of subject and object is overcome through a long and arduous process of yogic practice. The last two methods are considered to be superior, in that they immediately lead the Yogī to the experience of unity of Being, which at the practical level denotes the experience of soteric liberation. The emergence of this soteric experience is spontaneous and without exertion on the part of the individual practitioner. The spontaneity of the experience is so intense that the event of experience is impossible to measure.

There is hardly any difference between the *śāmbhava-upāya* and the *aṇu-upāya*.[105] Each way or method, however, may be, if considered chronologically or individually, thought of such

a method that would make it possible for the practitioner of progressing from one state to another. The Individual Way (*āṇava-upāya*) is of physical nature, and so is dependent on such techniques that involve physical exertion, whereas the Way of Energy (*śākta-upāya*) concerns itself with the interiority of the practitioner, and so accordingly has devised such techniques that are mental in nature. It is upon perfecting the Individual Way that the practitioner steps into the Way of Energy without any hassle. Insofar as the Way of Śiva (*śāmbhava-upāya*) and the Null Way (*aṇu-upāya*) are concerned, they are methods only technically but not actually, in that in these two ways the individual has nothing to do either mentally or physically.[106]

When the phenomenal world, through meditative absorption, is transcended or dissolved by making use of the first two ways, there emerge accordingly the energies of knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*), whereas the last two ways terminate in the rise of the energies of will (*icchā*) and bliss (*ānanda*).[107] These four ways of salvation also correspond to the four states of consciousness. The first three ways correspond to the states of waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming and deep sleep (*suṣupti*). The fourth state of consiousness, namely, the state of contemplative absorption (*turiya*), in the yogic context, is not a state. Transcending the empirical modes of consciousness, the Fourth accordingly has been identified with the metaphenomenal state, and as such is considered to be present in all the empirical states of consciousness. Some Tāntrikas are of the view that there is a state of consciousness that is beyond the Fourth (*turiyātīta*), which is spoken of as being the state of Fullness.

The intensity of the fall of divine grace (*śaktipāta*) of the Absolute is determined by the Yogī's own inner development. In other words, the descent of divine grace can be measured in the context of the Yogī's spiritual ascent. It must, however, be kept in mind that every Yogī follows a particular method in accordance with the mental dispositions he possesses. Each method does not lead to the same goal, in that the Individual Way is theistic in orientation, and the experience that results by cultivating this method is that of difference (*bheda*). The

Way of Energy, on the other hand, terminates in the experience of difference-in-identity (*behdābheda*). The Way of Śiva and the Null Method are so powerful as to lead the practitioner to the experience of unity of Being (*abheda*). Thus each method has its own specificity and uniqueness. Let us now find out as to what is constitutive of each method, and what are the marks that differentiate them from each other.

The āṇava-upāya

The basic presupposition among all the schools of Indian religious thought is the belief that man will remain tethered to the wheel of embodied existence (*saṃsāra*) to the extent he remains under the influence of nescience (*avidyā, māyā*). The coming and going (*gatāgata*) of embodied existents is compared to a rotating wheel, and that is why the cycle of rebirth of existents has been described in terms of a wheel in motion. While in the process of transmigration, the individual existent carries with him the tendencies (*saṃskāra*) and experiences (*vāsanā*) of his past existences. Involvement in this transmigartory cycle not only results in experiences that are painful, but also subject the individual to such suffering that is innate to embodied existence. In other words, it means that man is never at peace with himself. On the one hand, he is made to suffer the pain that his embodied existence entails and, on the other hand, he experiences suffering on account of being unable to satisfy every desire and wish that arises in his mind. In this endless cycle of unfulfilled desires, an existent suffers both the physical pain and mental agony.

The aim of the Individual Way is to liberate an individual from the painful condition by fixing his thought on the Absolute as God. It is believed that the Yogī, by fixing his thought on God, reaches a stage whereby his attention becomes focussed, sharp and concentrated. Further it is believed that the Yogī realises inner purity the moment he succeeds, through sharpened concentration, in penetrating the object of his concentration, which is God. Since much physical effort is involved in this method, so accordingly it has been termed as a method of action (*kriyā*).

The Yogī who pursues or cultivates this way of praxis does

not experience the descent of divine grace (*śaktipāta*) immediately. The descent of grace is gradual and slow. The reason for this is that the Yogī has not completely succeeded in cutting asunder the umbilical cord that connects him to the external world, or with such forces that are responsible in concealing the essential nature of the Self. Although aspiring for liberation, the Yogī still hankers after the things of the world or tries to seek satisfaction in such pleasures that are momentary. It is only after countless births that the Yogī of this spiritual state attains such a form of dispassion (*vairāgya*) whereby his sole aim remains the attainment of liberative gnosis. As the descent of the divine grace is neither immediate nor intense, it is therefore necessary for a Yogī of this state to engage arduously in such yogic practices that would facilitate the fall of divine grace. The aspirant, however, cannot practice any kind of yogic method on his own. He has to be initiated by a competent *guru*. Once initiated, the aspirant is to practice such yogic methods that his *guru* tells him to practice. The aspirant must not show any kind of slackness in the practice of his yogic praxis. If he is slothful with regard to practice (*abhyāsa*), he will definitely fail to achieve the desired result, which is the fall of divine grace.[108]

In order to understand as to what constitutes the Individual Way, we will have take into consideration those components of this way that are constitutive of it. Some of the most and esssential components of the Individual Way are the following:

1. *Guru*: In Tantricism *guru* is considered as being the actual incarnation of God, who is Śiva. It means that it is Śiva who alone is true and authentic *guru*. Śiva as God may be seen as representing the primordiality of what should be constitutive of a true *guru* in the world. It is Śiva, as the primordial Guru, who is seen both as a deliverer and redeemer of those existents who are in bondage, and thereby are, like the moving wheel, rotating from one existence to another.[109] The Guru in human form, in the context of this understanding of Tántricism, is but God himself. Whatever distinctions or differences between the *guru* as a human being and the disciple may exist, they however disappear the moment the disciple attains the same spiritual state that the *guru* enjoys. It means that the disciple

remains no more a disciple the moment the inner light of the spirit begins to shine in him. The disciple, due to this inner illumination, begins to recognise that the distinction that he experienced, prior to illumination, between himself and the *guru* is more apparent than real. The distinction that the disciple experienced between himself and the *guru* was due to impurities or what may be called ignorance. Once ignorance is removed through inner illumination, the disciple recognises that everything, nay the world itself, is Śiva. So the question of difference disappears by itself with the emergence of the knowledge of the unity of Being. The disciple, upon the attainment of illumination, remains in a state of consciousness that allows him to identify himself ontologically with his *guru*, and thereby with the primordial *guru*, who is Śiva.

A *guru* is one who has attained proficiency in matters of spirituality. It is not the learning of the scriptures or the mystical ecstasy that empowers a *guru* to confer liberative knowlege on his disciple. A *guru* who is proficient in scriptural knowledge or has experienced various psychic states is seen to be far inferior to the one who has realised the supreme spiritual unity with the Absolute, viz., who has transcended the subject-object difference of empirical consciousness. A *guru* of a high order may not be proficient in scriptural knowledge, but has gained such spiritual insight whereby he knows the essential aspects of what is contained in the scripture.[110]

A real *guru* is one who has the power to consecrate and initiate the disciple in the secret spiritual knowledge of Tantricism. According to Tantric thinking, there exists formal difference between consecration (*abhiṣeka*) and initiation (*dīkṣā*). The process of initiation is that in which the disciple, through special ritual-oriented yogic techniques, is empowered by the *guru* to realise divinity within himself. To begin with, a *guru*, first of all, performs the ritual of purification, and afterwards establishes a series of divine identifications in the body through the process of utterance of appropriate mantras as well as by touching (*nyāsa*) those parts of the body where the divinities have to be established. A *guru*, in the beginning, identifies himself with the disciple. Once the process of indentification

of divinities in the body has been completed, the *guru* then initiates the disciple in a particular yogic method that he considers appropriate. Once the mantra and the specific yogic techniques have been imparted to the disciple, then there is the ritual of interpenetration, viz., both the *guru* and the disciple penetrate each other ritually, and thereby collectively penetrate the cosmos. The process of interpenetration reaches the climax when it is fused with the Absolute. This fusion with the Absolute confers liberation upon the disciple from the cycle of transmigration. Consecration, in comparison to initiation, is that sacred act of the *guru* whereby he confers the powers of illumination upon the disciple. It is through this conferment that the disciple attains the state of liberation. Upon gaining liberation, the disciple himself assumes the role of a *guru*. In this manner the tradition that the *guru* has established (*guru-parmparā*) is maintained.

2. *The nature of yogic exercises:* One of the *a priori* assumptions of Tantricism is that the "human body is an epitome of the universe—a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm. There is, therefore, nothing in the universe that is not there in the haman body."[111] This understanding concerning the human body has been put forth by Vasugupta, the author of the *Śiva-sūtra,* in the following maxim. "As in the Yogī's body, so also elsewhere."[112] What this assumption implies is that the cosmic process corresponds to or parallels the biological process of the body. The conclusion drawn from this hypothesis is that the "energy," which activates the cosmic processes, is actually existing in a latent condition in the body. Making use of certain appropriate yogic techniques, the Yogī can arouse this latent energy in the body. A Yogī is enabled to cut asunder the knot of bondage the moment he succeeds in arousing this latent energy in the body—and this latent energy is also known by the name of *kuṇḍalinī.* The arousal of *kuṇḍalinī,* and its fusion with Śiva, who is pure consciousness, empower the Yogī with the power of recognition, which means that he now recognises that he is essentially identical with the Absolute. The yogic practices that a Yogī makes use of for the purpose of reaching the soteric goal are of two kinds, namely, the practices that are physical and the practices that are mental. The practices

that are related to the body are meant to discipline the body in such a manner as would enable the Yogī to become both physically and mentally immobile. The techniques that are used towards this end are, for example, the various bodily postures (*āsana*), breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), utterance of mantras, whereas the mental practices are inward-oriented, and so are of the nature of concentration and meditation. It is concentration that enables a Yogī to arrive at the state of mystical contemplation. The mystical contemplation is characterised by deep quietude.

The purpose of bodily posture is to immobilise the body. The immobilisation of the body results in deep concentration. Insofar as there is movement in the body, there is no possibility for the mind to be free from the various mental engagements. A mind that is on the move can never be able to gain full concentration. In order to gain mental immobility, it is necessary that the body should attain complete immobility, and this feat is achieved through the technique of posture. Once deep concentration is achieved, a Yogī loses the consciousness of the body. The non-awareness of the body means that the Yogī is in the state of neutrality, a state in which the body troubles no more in terms of having an impact upon the mind.[113] By depriving the body of movement, the Yogī thereby achieves the goal of his life, which is the transcendence of human condition. Whaterver be the technique, it is used by a Yogī as a kind of shield or defense against such external forces that cause disturbance in the mind-body complex.[114]

The other major technique that Tantricism makes use of is that of breath-control.[115] Tāntrikas think that there is rhythm in the cosmos as well as in the body, and man, in accordance with the rhythm, measures time. Time is seen as a mode of awareness concerning human condition. In other words, it means that time is considered as the symbol of finitude. To transcend time, for a Tāntrika, means to overcome the process of rhythmic breathing, which is characterised by inhalation and exhalation. The only way to overcome time is to overcome breathing. The transcendence of time, therefore, denotes the unification or the cosmocisation of the process of life. To bring opposites, like inhalation and exhalation, together means to

make an effort at identifying the bodily rhythm with the cosmic rhythm, so that the processes of time may completely be overcome.[116] The moment a Yogī realises the state of harmony and equipoise, that very moment he frees himself from the movement of time.[117]

The mental states and the breathing processes are related to each other in the same way as mind is to the body. The intensity or duration of breathing is directly effected by the external stimuli, or internal agitation, viz., the external pressure or emotional stress dircetly determine the rate as well as the intensity of breathing. When a man, for example, is emotionally calm or there is less physical exertion, the breathing process becomes calm and measured. The Yogī, through the technique of breath-control, stabilises the states of consciousnes. It is through the stabilisation of breathing that a Yogī is enabled to bring about stability in the three phases of breathing, namely, inhalation, retention of the inhaled breath, and exhalation. Upon achieving perfect synchronisation between these three phases of breathing, a Yogī thereby penetrates the states of consciousness.[118] The culmination of the practice of breath-control is the unification of breath, time and consciousness.

3. *The nature of meditation:* The internal process of neutrality begins with the yogic exercise of concentration (*dhāraṇā*). It is a process by which the mind fixes or concentrates its entire attention on an object or on pure thought. Once concentration has deepened, there comes the next stage, which is that of mental absorption (*dhyāna*), and which also is popularly known as meditation. It is from the stage of meditation that the Yogī steps into actual mystical contemplation (*samādhi*). It is upon reaching the state of mystical contemplation that the Yogī has the exprience of such a repose (*viśrānti*) that is non-dependent. The state of mystical repose represents the condition of mystical ecstasy or enstasy. In order to attain to the state of inward neutrality, and thereby to the state of mystical repose, it is necessary for a Yogī to make his body a fit vehicle for stabilising the mental processes, and this is accomplished when complete immobility of both mind-body is achieved. And to achieve this goal a Yogī has to gain complete control over his breathing as well upon the movements of the body.[119] A Yogī gains

control over breathing and over bodily movements by unifying them, viz., by unifying the opposites. A Yogī, as a result of this unification of the opposites, sinks deep within, and thereby protects himself against the external and internal forces of distraction.

It is necessary, at this point, to make it clear that terms like "concentration" and "meditation" should not be treated as being synonymous. They, no doubt, are closely related to each other. Even then they have to be seen as distinct from each other in terms of both definition and praxis. The definition of both the terms that Patañjali offers are the following: Concentration is "the fixation of thought on a single point," whereas meditation is "a continuous current of unified thought."[120] These definitions make it clear that, before contemplating upon an object in a unified manner, the Yogī has to concentrate, without any distraction, on an object or pure thought. The state of meditation, in comparison to concentration, is arrived at when concentration is prolonged for a long duration of time. The Yogī, through meditation, ultimately arrives at the state of mystical repose and which is seen as the clumination of the Individual Way.

4. *The nature of mystical repose:* The Sanskrit term that is used for mystical repose is *viśrānti*—a term that is difficult to translate. The term literally denotes the state of absolute quietude or stillness. The quality of mystical repose is dependent to what extent a Yogī has succeeded in turning cons-ciousness inwards, viz., how much meditative absorption has been deepened. Initially, the process of meditative absorption is not so deep as to overcome the sense of differentiation completely. It is upon transcending the cognitive dualism that the Yogī actually gains non-differentiated state of absorption, which accordingly gives rise to what is called the mystical state of repose.

The goal of consciousness, according to Tantricism, is the Self.[121] The energy within the human body is incapable of finding by itself a definite form of concentration, which, with continuous practice, could lead the Yogī to such deep introversion whereby absorption in the Absolute can be actualised. The only point of consummation for energy is

nothing else but to be absorbed in the Absolute.

The Absolute as the Supreme Ego is characterised by total rest and quietude. However, the Yogī, who follows the Individual Way, has no possibility of reaching the non-differentiated state of mystical repose in terms of being absorbed in the Absolute. A Yogī who cultivates the superior methods of Yoga reaches the transcendent state of repose. The Individual Way only leads the Yogī to such a point of rest or repose that is available to empirical consciousness. The quietude or repose that this method makes available to the Yogī is that of difference.[122] Even though not free from the consciousness of duality, the Yogī however is enabled to free his mind from the numerous whirls that arise and subside in the mind.[123] The mystical repose that emerges through the cultivation of the Individual Way should be viewed as a starting point for such a revelation of the Self that comes about when the Yogī completely sinks in the inward absorption of consciousness. If the Yogī desires to progress further in his spiritual development, he will have to cultivate the next method, which is the Way of Energy (*śāktopāya*).

The Śāktopāya

The Way of Energy (*śāktopāya*) is also known as the Way of Knowledge (*jñānopāya*). It is so called because the Yogī, through the use of creative reasoning (*bhāvanā*), is so empowered as to be able to remove such erroneous conceptions that conceal the real nature of the Self.[124] It is by meditating upon the essential unity of the microcosm and the macrocosm that the actual nature of the Self is intuited.[125]

The Way of Energy has devised such psychophysical methods by the employment of which an initiate is enabled to make a proper study or analysis of the various states of consciousness. It is through such a study that the Yogī arrives at such a point of understanding whereby he sinks deep into the absorption of cosmic consciousness, viz., the individual consciousness is dispersed or submerged in the universal consciousness. The Way of Energy is a point of transition between the inferior and superior ways of salvation. This method, on account of its mental orientation, is less cumbersome than the Individual

Way. The Yogī who cultivates this method discards the forceful use of will. Since less exertion is involved in this method, so this method accordingly, in a flash of lightning, leads the Yogī to the experience of energy. There occurs, upon experiencing the intensity of energy, what may be called the integration of being. The intensity of energy may either be the intense devotional love for Śiva or be such emotions as passion, terror, etc. The experience of the intensity of energy can be sudden and spontaneous.

When the Yogī follows the Individual Way, which is also known as the Way of Action (*kriyopāya*), he consciously and deliberately fixes his attention on an object or on pure thought. In the case of the Way of Energy, a Yogī's concentration is not focussed on a gross object. As the way is mental in nature, so it is natural for it to adumbrate such a form of concentration that is mental. It is for this reason that concentration is fixed on pure thought. Concentration on pure thought results in the purification of such images that the Yogī visualises in his imagination. The purification of images occurs to such an extent that the Yogī's attention itself becomes one with the visualised image. As a result of this purification, there occurs the emergence of energy in its purest form. The energy, upon its emergence, remains absorbed in the consciousness of the subject.

In order to arrive at the experience of pure awareness of Being, a Yogī has to pass through the following stages of sublimation, absorption, momentary awareness, and the emergence of transcendent consciousness.

1. *Sublimation*: The activation of energy in the body is actualised when the Yogī, through intense concentration, abolishes the awareness of the object of concentration, which means that the object of concentration and concentrated awareness has to merge into each other. It is through this merger that the Yogī is empowered to develop such a disposition in the mind that is through and through mystical. This feat the Yogī can achieve if he, first of all, brings about stability in the intellect, and this he can achieve only by adhering to the conviction he holds dear to his heart. It is the stability of the intellect that allows imagination to concentrate

on pure energy in its emergent aspect. The emergent energy manifests itself in terms of desire, bliss and knowledge. Inward breathing awakens the *kuṇḍalinī*, and thereby leads the Yogī to the experience of inward vibration. The Yogī, without any physical exertion, comes in contact with the undifferentiated energy of consciousness. This contact results in spontaneity, relaxation and in the sublimation of all internal passions.

2. *Momentary Awareness:* At the third stage of spiritual development the Yogī gains awareness of undifferentiated consciousness, but it is an awareness that is momentary and short-lived. What happens at this stage is that the Yogī's awareness of the "emptiness of consciousness" flashes as suddenly as is the appearance of flashes of light of lightning. It is a flash of intuitive awareness in which the structure of duality, although momentarily, is overcome, and consciousness thereby gains the awareness of emptiness of the not-self.

3. *Creative contemplation:* The orientation of creative contemplation (*bhāvanā*) should be viewed to be such a spontaneous intuitive awareness whereby the Yogī knows as to how to affirm the cosmic energy. Mere mystical intuition can neither transform nor pacify the human personality. It is only through mantric suggestion or projection (for example, I am Śiva) that the Yogī, step by step, is enabled to appropriate and assimilate energy in its cosmic dimension. Through the assimilation of energy the subconscious latencies are eliminated. It is upon the assimilation of energy that there occurs a transformative change in the personality of a Yogī.

4. *The emergence of transcendent consciousness:* The ultimate aim of a Yogī is to transcend the empirical mode of awareness by gaining access to the Transcendent Consciousness, which is the Absolute and which in religious terms is equated with Paramaśiva. This transcendent state of consciousness is also spoken of as the state of Śiva or Bhairava. It is a state in which the Yogī has the experience of complete self-integration, of perfect tranquillity and of wholeness. The state that precedes it is characterised by a kind of experience in which Śiva is seen as the other. Also the experience is momentary. However, the experience of this state leaves its permanent imprint upon

the Yogī's psyche. It is the permanency of this experience that enables the Yogī to have the understanding of the Absolute as being of the nature of consciousness, and it is as consciousness that Paramaśiva is understood as the substratum of everything that is found or experienced in the world. It is an experience of Paramaśiva in terms of immanence. It is, however, a stage of experience in which the Yogī does not totally transcend his human condition, viz., consciousness is still oriented towards such conceptual thinking that has its roots in the subject-object duality. Since this state is still mired in conceptual thinking, so it does not at all satisfy the spiritual yearnings of a Yogī. It is, therefore, natural for the Yogī to seek that form of mystical experience that transcends the antithetical character of conceptual thinking. However, the Way of Energy cannot lead a Yogī to higher forms of mystical experience. A Yogī who is desirous of higher mystical experiences will have to step into the Way of Śiva, and it is by following the Way of Śiva that there emerges the vision of perfect unity of Being.

5. *The nature of kuṇḍalinī*: Tantric praxis is so adumbrated or formulated as to terminate in the cosmicisation of the body, viz., of bringing about an actual unity between the microcosm and the macrocosm. It is believed that all the elements that are in the universe are to be found, although in a latent form, in the body, which in philosophical terms means that the particular has no existence apart from the universal. The cosmicisation of the body is accomplished by cultivating certain yogic methods, such as, concentration, internal worship, bodily gestures, and utterance of mantras. By cosmicising the body, the Yogī attempts, through the unification and synthesis of the opposites, to arrive at the state of cosmic unity. The experience of the cosmic unity takes place at that moment when the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened from the dormant state at the *mūlādhāra-cakra*. The awakening of this dormant power signifies that the energy has to be moved upward the spinal cord till it reaches the crown of the head, which is considered as the sacred abode of Śiva. It is at this centre that the real unification of Śakti (cosmic energy) and Śiva (the Absolute) occurs.[126]

The upward movement of the *kuṇḍalinī* is facilitated when

she as energy penetrates the wheels of energy (*cakra*) that are located along the spinal cord. It is by ascending through the gracious vein (*suṣumṇā*) that the *kuṇḍalinī* reaches her final abode of Śiva. It is at this place, namely, what is called the *sahasrāra-cakra*, where complete fusion between Śiva and Śakti occurs. It is through the method of breath-control that the *kuṇḍalinī* is aroused from her sleep, and thereby is made to ascend upward through the gracious vein. The *kuṇḍalinī*, while penetrating the wheels of energy, purifies them from the accumulated impurities. The wheels of energy, on account of the heat of the *kuṇḍalinī*, become completely lifeless during the process of absorption of elements that the wheels represent. It is the unleashed energy of *kuṇḍalinī* that absorbs the elements of each wheel. This process of purification and absorption goes on till the *kuṇḍalinī* is united with Śiva at the *saharāra-cakra*. As a consequence of this purification of the wheels and the absorption of elements, the Yogī has the experience of self-integration in terms of which everything is viewed as being characterised by identity-in-difference.

6. *The nature of mystical experience:* The culmination of the Way of Energy is characterised by such a mystical experience that is known as identity-in-difference. The Yogī's absorption (*samāveśa*) in Śiva is such as would not terminate in the total absence of the other. This experience of idenity-in-difference is technically called the state of *bhāvanā*—a term difficult to translate. The term indicates an obscure or hidden tendency towards a goal that is conceptually neither explicit nor clear. This obscure tendency may be linked, analogously speaking, to an action that has been initiated in haste without being aware as to why it has been initiated. Somānanda has explained this hidden urge in the following words: "During the course of this waiting, which in the mystical life is accompanied by fervour, the first vibration of the will is only truly perceptible in the heart at the moment when memory emergs."[127] Vasubandhu, too, thinks that the mystical goal is an obscure tendency of the vital energy that directs consciousness towards a specific goal.

The mystical experience that emerges by cultivating the Way of Energy should not be confused with the experience that

occurs through meditative concentration of the Individual Way. There exists an explicit difference between the meditator and the object of meditation for them that follow the Individual Way. In the case of the Way of Energy the object of meditation is not explicit, and consequently the experience that results too is not clear either. Although the Yogī experiences rapture, peace, interior word, yet the content of the experience is such that it cannot be explained or defined.[128]

Once creative contemplation (*bhāvanā*) attains lucidity and purity, there then emerges intuitive knowledge of such a nature that can be equated with pure wisdom. The creative contemplation gives rise to a state in which the powerful evocation or tension directs consciousness towards the Transcendent. The aim of the Yogī is to arrive at the experience of the mystical state whereby integration of the individualised consciousness with the Absolute takes place.[129] Whether it is religious worship or yogic method, the Yogī makes use of them to the extent he reaches the state of absorption, and as a result of this mental absorption is experienced self-integration as being equivalent to the experience of identity-in-difference. The real mystical state of identity is reached when the individualised consciousness merges completely in the Absolute—and this is explained thus:

> Thus, thanks to mystical realisation, he (the Yogī) arrives at the state of identity with Śiva in the totality of categories. What grief, what delusion can befall him who perceives all as *brahman*.[130]

7. *The significance of ritualised sex:* At the outset it must be made quite clear that the Way of Energy does not accord the same importance to ritualsed sex as it bestows upon the mystical experience. Sexuality, however, has an important role to play for those who follow the Way of Energy. The significance of ritualised sex must be analysed in the context of the goal that Tantricism has set for itself, which is the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*. Moreover, Tāntrikas believe that it is quite legitimate to seek physical pleasure, including sexual pleasure. It is further believed that sexuality can be made use of for higher spiritual purposes.

It is affirmed by Tāntrikas of all hues that no form of spiritual life is possible unless "the heart of cosmos" is opened up. The opening up of the heart of cosmos results in the experience of supreme ecstasy. In order to actualise the opening up of the heart, the Yogī is asked to make use of the following five methods, and they are:

i. the agitation of the nerves;
ii. the absorption into the pure energy;
iii. the excitation of the nerves, and thereby also their repose;
iv. the concentration of energy in the Self, and
v. the cosmic expansion of energy.[131]

i. The agitation of the nerves is initiated or brought about through sexual intercourse. It is such a means as would lead to the co-agitation of both the partners, viz., of man and woman. "The excitement of union with energy brings about her (energy's) possession. The joy of the reality of *brahman* is a reality abiding in ourselves."[132]

ii. The second means, which consists of in the absorption of pure Familiac Energy (*kulāveśa*), is characterised by an orientation in which the actual object (and in our case it is woman) is completely abandoned. It is with the image of the object with which the Yogī unites himself mentally. The image of the object is only remembered. It is through recollection of the remembered object that the Yogī intensifies the vital energy: "Goddess, the intense recalling to the mind the pleasure a woman has given with her tongueplay and caresses, produces a torrent of joy, even if the energy is absent."[133] It is through recollection of the object that the emotions get intensified, and consequently are given up base tendencies that may be lurking in the mind.

iii. The third method consists of such techniques whereby the nerves can be excited. Upon the excitation of the nerves, there occurs, at the end of the climax, the experience of complete repose of energy. The Yogī, while following this method, gives up the object completely, and what remains is the pure subject only.[134] The sensual pleasure plays an important role insofar as the excitement of the nerves is

concerned. It is maintained that the aesthetic delight results in the refinement of sensibilities as well as empowers the senses to enjoy the aesthetic joy to the fullest.[135] It should, however, be noted that the process of thinking comes to complete standstill at that point of experience when the aesthetic delight is maximum. The arrest of thought results in the experience of relaxation, and thereby the internal agitation is pacified. The inner purification facilitates the opening up of the heart.

It is the firm belief of Tāntrikas that the content of the Self consists of concentrated consciousness and bliss. The essence of pure consciousness is the Ego, and the nature of the Ego is that of bliss. The Ego, being free in itself, contains the entire cosmos within itself. The Ego has the experience of pure consciousness only in terms of bliss. Whatever joyful experiences an individual may have—all of them are seen as the reflection of the divine joy of the Self. It is from the centre of the Self from where issues forth the experience of joy.

The object of pleasure fades away from consciousness when the being of Yogī is seized by the fervour of joy, viz., the more there is the intenstity of joy, the more a Yogī gets lost in the throb of bliss. It is joy that issues forth from the inner cave of the Self. "That which is called the supreme joy, serenity, wonderment is only a determination of self-consciousness in which consciousness is savoured in an indivisible manner."[136]

iv and v. As far as the fourth and fifth methods are concerned, they are employed as techniques for the introversion of energy of the cosmic self (*sarvātma-saṃkoca*) as well as for the expansion (*vyāpti*) of the cosmic energy: "Let the Yogī meditate on the joy experienced at the junction between the fire (*vahni*) and the ever-present poison (*viṣa*). Though thus detached, or breath thus elevated, he experiences the intimacy and joy of love."[137]

The mystical images of fire and of poison should be understood, on the one hand, as an intimate form of sexual intercourse and, on the other hand, as an ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī*. The Yogī, while engaged in sexual intercourse, is absorbed in the sexual pleasure to such an extent that he has no awareness of duality of anything. The images also refer to the beginning

as well as to the end of the sexual act. They also refer to the contraction as well as to the expansion (*vikāsa*) of energy, which is the *kuṇḍalinī*.

The images of fire and poison signify for a Yogī that, when engaged in deep meditative absorption, he must concentrate on the sensation of joy that emerges from love, viz., concentration has to be fixed on the intersection where fire and poison meet and encounter. It also means that the Yogī has to concentrate on Śiva in the state of coitus, and thereby is facilitated the unification of the cosmic breath as inhalation and exhalation. There is the experience of joy when the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti, are united in the *sahasrāra-cakra*. This experience of the commingling of the Divine Couple results in the experience of the Absolute as being one and identical. In such an experience the notion of difference, at least at the surface level, is removed.

The main purpose of going through these stages of experience is that the Yogī, in the beginning, is made to understand the content of the limited joy of the senses, though insignificant when compared to the divine joy, serves as a background for the joy that is to come. As such sensual pleasures are seen to be valid means for the realisation of divine joy. Finally, a Yogī is also led to understand the transcendent nature of Energy, which expresses itself through the bliss of sexual orgasm. Thus, both the limited joy of the senses and the vibrant energy together lead the Yogī to the plenitude of joy that is unsurpassable, and the source of the joy, from a human point of view, is in the sexual act itself.[138]

Insofar as the ritual of the sexual coitus is concerned, it is of three types (*ācāra*), namely, left-hand (*vāmācāra*), right-hand (*dakṣiṇācāra*) and the familiac (*kulācāra*). In the left-hand system the consort is made to sit on the left side of her male partner. The participant couples in the ritual make use of the Five Ms (*pañca-makāra* or *pañca-tattva*).[139] As far as the right-hand system is concerned, it makes use of the forbidden ingredients symbolically, which means that the ritual use of ingredients is performed mentally, viz., the Yogī engages in the sexual act mentally, and makes the mental substitution for the five ingredients. The familiac way is not much different from the

left-hand system. It is completely devoted to the pure and undifferentiated energy (*kula*). The system has synthesised the practices of the above two systems. The Tāntrikas consider it to be the best and superior method among all the methods.

The ritual of the sexual act has a twofold function. It is viewed as one of the means for the attainment of the highest spiritual experience in terms of the union of the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti. The Yogī experiences complete immersion in the Absoulte, and in this condition he continues to remain even in situations that are adverse.[140] The ritual also serves the purpose of testing the ablity of the Yogī as to whether he has achieved control over his emotions, particularly whether he is able to maintain the continuity of orgasmic bliss. It amounts to saying that the aim of the Yogī is to realise an uninterrupted bliss of sexual orgasm, and on account of it may remain immersed in the joy of the Self.[141]

One of the major doctrinal principles of Tantricism is that the transcendent joy is both physical and spiritual. The physical joy, experienced through a sexual act, has not to be viewed as an end in itself; rather it is a means for ushering in spiritual development, so that the nectar of the transcendent may terminate in the transfiguration of the body. The forbidden ingredients are used for invigorating the senses, and by exciting the senses, they are freed from the sense of lack. It helps in the intensification of joy in consciousness.[142] The human couple in their sexual act are by means of ritual transformed into a divine couple, and this is "true sexual union . . . the other unions represent carnal relations with women."[143]

The participation in the sexual rite, however, is not open to all. The question as to who is qualified to participate in this important ritual has to be seen in the context of Tantric typology of human nature. The Tāntrikas have classifed human character into three types, namely, animalistic (*paśu*), heroic (*vīra*) and godly (*daivī*). Those who possess animalistic tendencies are not allowed to participate in this ritual, because people of such character only want to gratify their lustful desires. It is the person of heroic character who is entitled to participate in this ritual, because a person of this character has transcended the animalistic tendencies. Insofar as people of

godly nature are concerned, they need not participate in this ritual, because they have no need of it.

It is the man of heroic character alone who is allowed, along with his consort, to participate in this ritual of sexual coitus. It is the hero who alone can make use of this ritual in a right way on account of him having made significant spiritual progress. It is "only the valiant warriors (who can) take part in the Great Banquet of Life having fully realised the Self in its cosmicity, since they are the only one's able to enjoy cosmic bliss where the joys of this world and the bliss of the Self are intermingled."[144] The consort, too, must be in possession of the highest qualities of energy.[145] She must have the mind capable of penetrating the supreme state of the transcendent Śiva. It is also necessary that she should be related to the Yogī, "because . . . there is a greater identity of nature on account of both uterine and spiritual relations."[146] While engaging in the sexual act, the mind of the couple must be free from all carnal desires. The effort must be to get immersed in the supreme state of consciousness.[147]

The sexual rite is divided into two parts. The first part is preparatory, and so is meant to prepare the couple for the actual rite in which the five prohibited ingredients are to be made use of. The hero, initially, consecrates the site where the ritual of sexual coitus is to take place. After consecrating and purifying ritually the site, the hero purifies his own body through the proccess of utterance of mantras as well as by touching the various locations of the body. And this process is technically called *mantra-nyāsa*. It is a ritual method whereby the Yogī, by touching the different parts of the body, assimilates the divine forces through mantric projection. Finally, he awakens the *kuṇḍalinī*.[148] The second part of the ritual begins with the introduction of the consort. The various couples assembled at the ritual site sit in a circle, whereas the *guru*, along with his consort, sits in the middle of the circle. It is on account of this formation of the circle that the entire ritual is known as the worship of the circle (*cakra-pūjā*). The ritual begins by worshipping the circle. The aim of the worship of the circle is to establish the consort as Goddess and the Yogī as Śiva. This divine attribution imputed on to the couple is very

significant, in that the sexual act remains no more on the plane of the body.

The other aspect of the worship of the circle consists of such acts that make the five prohibited ingredients ritually pure. It is believed that if the ingredients are not ritually purified, their use will lead to results that would be quite opposite to what is intended of them. Thus the ingredients are ritually purified from their polluting effects by establishing their invigorating nature. Upon the purification of the ingredients, the Yogī thereupon worships the consort as the Goddess. The ritual concludes with the sexual act. It is an act through which the Yogī is united with energy. Prior to the actualisation of the sexual intercourse, the Yogī identifies himself with Śiva and worships mentally the couch upon which the sexual act is to take place. He then sits on the couch, and introduces the consort to the circle of worshippers. Then he whispers the seed-formula into the ear of his consort. He also bathes the consort with fragrant oil, combs her hair, and dresses her. He sits beside her on the couch, and consecrates the various parts of the body through *mantra-nyāsa*. Thus the Yogī creates such a disposition, both in himself and the consort, that is found in the Divine Couple, Śiva and Śakti. The Yogī and his consort, in the attitude of oneness, engage in the sexual intercourse, and ultimately, at the height of orgasm, lets the semen go.

The Yogī does not consider the use of ritualised sex as immoral. Having indentified himself with Śiva, he thereby transcends the empirical or ethical notion of good and evil, and thereby also of duality. The five ingredients have no polluting effects upon the Yogī. The Yogī does not experience shame, lust or doubt, for every thing is seen permeated by the presence of Śiva, and so the declaration: "All is pure, all is joy."[149]

This divinisation of sex is one of the major contributions of Tantricism to the religious thinking that otherwise abhors sex. To a Tāntrika sex in itself is neither good nor bad. It is how we make use of it that makes it either good or bad. Sexuality becomes degraded when the sexual act is determined merely by lust. If used for pure purposes, sexuality, according to

Tantricism, can lead to the experience of divine bliss. It is because of this affirmative view of sexuality that Tantricism has given rise to the maxim: Liberation (*mukti*) through sensual pleasure (*bhukti*).

The Way of Śiva

The Way of Śiva (*śāmbhava-upāya*) is also referred to as the Way of Will (*icchā-upāya*). It is so termed because the ultimate state of Śiva is realised through the use of will. A Yogī who has reached the mystical state of identity-in-difference through the cultivation of the Way of Energy steps automatically into the Way of Śiva. The Yogī of the Way of Śiva has no need of such yogic supports or techniques that would be useful in making his mind-body complex disciplined, which means that the Yogī of this way is so advanced spiritually that he is no more dependent on such physical or mental crutches as the yogic techniques. The Yogī is so advanced spiritually that all his sensorial and mental faculties are so introverted as to make them non-functional. Upon the attainment of introversion of the faculties, the Yogī accordingly is freed from the sense of dependency on the yogic discipline or upon the methods of meditation. The interiority of the Yogī is so pure as would terminate in the absorption in the Absolute. The mystical intuition surges and pervades the entire being of the Yogī. It is the Way of Śiva that leads the Yogī to the state of liberation (*jīvanmukti*).[150]

The absorption of the individual self in the cosmic self (viz., in Paramaśiva) is complete and perfect for the Yogī that cultivates the Way of Śiva. By cultivating the Way of Śiva, the Yogī successfully discards the empirical ways of thinking. He experiences such a mystical state in which the Yogī at will is able to absorb the totality of the categories of existence into his subjectivity. It is a state in which differentiation between the subject and the object is dissolved. The Way of Śiva lays much emphasis upon the experience of the spontaneous void (*śūnya*), which is a state of inspiration and in which the self has a direct intuition of the Absolute.

1. *The nature of the void:* The concept of void, for the first time, was used by Nāgārjuna as a means of explaining

philosophically the nature of phenomenality as well as of the Absolute. Since phenomenal entities have arisen through mutual dependence, so they cannot be ascribed with an essential nature (*svabhāva*). Being destitute of essential nature, they can only be spoken of as being empty. Similarly the Absolute is transcendent to every thing that is phenomenal, which means that it cannot be explained by making use of predicates. As an inexpressible category, the Absolute can be spoken of only in terms of emptiness. Since both the phenomenal realm as well as the Absolute are equated with emptiness, so they are identical. It is this basic concept of emptiness that Tantricism has borrowed from the Mahāyāna. The way it has used this concept, however, is different. It makes use of this concept in order to explain certain mystical states that a Yogī experiences.

a. *Theory of Momentariness:* The Buddhists were the first who, for the first time, gave a philosophical colour to the notion of momentariness (*kṣaṇavāda*). For them the objective world that is perceived by the senses is in constant flux. Since everything is in a state of becoming, so nothing is permanent, which means that every phenomenal entity, whether physical or mental, is impermanent and insubstantial. It is the notion of impermanence that led the Buddhists to categorise every entity as being momentary, which means that an entity is so momentary that it lasts only for a moment. This concept of momentariness has been interpreted in Tantricism to mean that every phenomenal category undergoes constanly the process of recreation, preservation and dissolution. The rapidity of this process is so fast and immediate that it is beyond the capacity of the intellect to observe as to how change occurs. The argument is illustrated by pointing out that the flame of an oil lamp, when observed externally, seems to be constant. But, in fact, what happens is that each moment a new flame comes into being by replacing the preceding one. The passing away and the coming into being is a continuous game of that that is phenomenal.[151]

This theory of momentariness has been used by Tantricism to explain that both being and non-being coexist simultaneously in each and every phenomenal entity. The coming into being

of an entity denotes being, whereas its passing away or dissolution signifies non-being. Tantricism accepts the Buddhist principle of single moment, viz., emergence and dissolution occurs in a single moment. It however rejects the Buddhist idea that time is a real objective entity. For a Tāntrika time, in its ontological sense, is unreal, and therefore cannot serve as a link between the instants of time-process. Since there exists no real link between the instants of time, the Yogī, by delinking the instants of time through deep absorption, merges in the void, which exists between the instants. Through this penetration or merger, the Yogī gains the status of "the Lord of Time," viz., a Yogī is so empowered that he both creates and destroys the instants as and when he desires. This, according to Abhinavagupta, is a "rupture of the two modalities of time," namely, of the past and of the future. In the *Parātriśikā*[152] Abhinava says:

> It is this very instant . . . at the present, actual moment that (the mystical experience) is realised, while the past and the future are excluded. Then the present moment is also rejected as dependent upon the other two. . . .
> Having immobilised his own wheel of light and having drunk the complete ambrosia, one may be fully appeased in an actual present, after having put an end to two times.

In the Way of Energy the centre of the heart is viewed as an intersection between the two moments, whereas in the Way of Śiva the gap that exists between the two instants is termed as the rupture of the void. Thus the state of the void is also considered as "the undifferentiated plenitude at the junction of the two poles . . . the plenary state of *bhairava*."[153]

It is from this perspective of the mystical vision of the void that a Yogī views everything. The state of the void can be equated to the state of sameness, and so it is a state that is characterised by repose and evenness. Says Kṣemarāja: "Since nothing can have an essence without inhering in (viz., in the Absolute) as in a wall, the august Consciousness is itself the Centre, subsisting as the innermost nature of everything."[154]

b. *The mysitcal state of the void*: At the very outset it should be clear that the term "void" does not in Tantricism signify

any kind of negation, nor does it denote non-existence of Being. The term, rather, describes a mystical state in terms of which the Absolute is experienced as being ineffable and inexpressible. When the state of the void is considered in relation to time, it signifies the gap that exists between the two instants. Moreover, the description of the Absolute as absolutely void (*śūnyāti-śūnya*) refers to the mystical experience in which consciousness is experienecd as being of the nature of vibration, which means that the nature of I-consciousness is not just light, but also is that of vibration. It is these two aspects—light and vibration—which are constitutive of the Absolute. It indicates that the Absolute is not an impersonal lifeless Being, but is I-consciousness. And as I-consciousness the Absolute is absolutely free (*sarva svatantrya*). When Abhinavagupta, in his *Paramārthasāra*,[155] identifies the Self with the void, he thereby explains that the mystical state of the void is a state in which the totality of the phenomenal categories completely disappear from the consciousness of a Yogī. What remains, upon the disappearance of the categories, is "the expanse of ether." He further elaborates this idea in the *Tantrāloka* by saying that the experience of the void may be linked to the infinite void of the ether. Since it is difficult, nay impossible, to conceptualise concretely the experience of the void, we can speak of it only in terms that "it is not." It is the highest form of experience that a Yogī can have by cultivating the Way of Śiva.[156] The experience of the state of void is such that it is completely free from determinations: "It plunges, into the non-dual void, in that place is the Self illumined."[157] The Absolute is spoken of as void because it is free from all determinations, which denotes its absolute sovereignty. As such the Absolute has no limitations whatsoever of any kind.[158]

The two aspects that constitute the Absolute as consciousness are primary and relative. Accordingly is the Absolute spoken of as "the receptacle of the great void."[159] The relativisation of the Absolute begins when the process of manifestation is initiated. When there is stir within the Absolute, there then is initiated the process of manifestation. It begins when the Supreme Śiva sends forth the light of consciousness into the void of time.[160] This void is an important

phase in the process of manifestation of the Absolute as the phenomenal categories, because consciousness as "I" needs to veil its plenitude. It is by concealing its nature that the Absolute manifests itself as the phenomenal world of entities (*idaṃ*).

It is through the veiling power of energy (*māyā-śakti*) that the Absolute appears as "all this" (viz., the phenomenal world). The Absolute as the projected world appears as if it has fragmented itself into what may be called the phenomenal diversity. It is because of reducing itself to the manifest condition that the centre of consciousness loses its evenness, which, in other words, denotes division. The undifferentiated consciousness, however, remains latent in the heart of things. Insofar as there is duality, consciousness will remain in its undifferentiated form as a potentiality within the heart of objective world. In order to experience the undifferentiated nature of consciousness, a Yogī will have to free the centre from all forms of duality by returning to the primal unity. It is only then that the Yogī will experience the world as not a fragmentation of the Absolute.

2. *The Nature of the Mystical Ecstasy*: The initial act of the mystical vibration or stir is spoken of as the ecstasy or *udyama* or *udyoga*. If literally translated, the terms would mean ardour, fervour, inner thrust, flame of desire, inspiration, ecstasy, etc. The pure act of ecstasy is characterised by an experience in which "the moment in the present" ceases to be, and that means that the movement of time comes to a halt. The mystical ecstasy is sudden and unexpected. It is like a flash of lightning. The ecstasy of experience is such as would result in the experience of the cessation of the universe. It is the Yogī of the highest order who has the possibility of experiencing this mystical flash of lightning. It is an experience of pure act. Before the fructification of this pure act of illumination, there is a subtle movement in the heart, a movement that is felt but can neither be quantified nor measured. The stir is so sudden that it "gushes out" spontaneously. This gushing out is so sudden that the Yogī, with all his might and strength, holds onto Śiva in the same manner as a predator holds to his prey.[161]

This sudden mystical gushing out of the vibration from the

depths of the heart is characterised by three phases or modes, namely, activity, knowledge and will. The mystical vibration as a possibility, in the beginning, becomes actual when it passes through these three phases. After passing through them, it merges in Śiva. When the vibration is still at the level of action, it continues to function in terms of duality or objectivity. A Yogī still perceives himself as different from the Absolute. At the second stage of knowledge, however, concrete objectivity is transformed into abstract thinking. At the final phase of will, there is an intense desire for life, a desire that penetrates the heart of vibration. The result is that there is an instant flash of mystical illumination. It is an illumination in which the Yogī experiences sudden pull towards Śiva, and this pull takes place in the intimacy of the heart. As the impulse is of an undifferentiated order, it is said that the vibration is located at that plane where the Cosmic Heart pulsates. The awareness of the impluse is said to correspond to the cosmic awakening and to the highest illumination (*unmeṣa*). The instantaneous pulsation does not belong to the individual; it belongs to Śiva: "The concentration of the myriads of energies everywhere perceived is Śiva, the supremely independent; his impulse is the essence of the Heart."[162]

The Null Way

The Tāntrikas consider the Null Way as the highest and the supreme way to salvation or liberation. It is a method in which no mental or physical techniques are employed or involved. The non-use of specific techniques does not mean that the Null Way prohibits the use of techniques. It neither prohibits nor affirms the use of rituals or of techniques. This way is meant for them who have spiritually advanced so much that they have no need to cultivate any kind of discipline. So it is the advanced adepts who alone are the rightful claimants (*adhikārī*) of the Null Way (*aṇu-upāya*). The Null Way is so natural and spontaneous that, for example, when a *guru* says: "You are the Absolute," there occurs a spontaneous flash of illumination in the disciple, and as a result of this illumination the disciple realises his identity with the Absolute. The Null Way is also spoken of as the Way of Bliss (*ānanda upāya*),

because it is the infinite bliss that is the characteristic feature of this method. It is basically a method that terminates in the intellectual "recognition" (*pratyabhijñā)* of the Self as being non-different from Paramaśiva. As no technique of any kind is involved in this way, so it is completely free from mantric initiation.[163]

Basic to this way is the recognition of the Self as being absolutely free and autonomous. Usually man-in-the-street does not know the autonomous nature of the Self because of metaphysical ignorance. When, however, the intuition of "recognition" emerges within the adept, there is the spontaneous realisation of identity of microcosm and macrocosm. And with his recognitive realisation of identity is removed the veil of ignorance.

One of the main ideas that the philosophy of recognition has propounded is the concept of the Lord's sovereign will. It is because of this sovereign will that the Lord willingly begins the process of phenomenal manifestation. While reducing himself to the atomic condition, the Lord does it willingly. The concept of sovereignty of will excludes any kind of inner or outer necessity in God. There is no necessity in the Lord that compells him to give rise to the manifest world. The absolute sovereignty as freedom "represents," according to Abhinava, "the Supreme Energy of the highest Lord and includes all the powers that can be attributed to him."[164]

The Null Way is the culmination of the Way of Śiva. Both the Ways are, more or less, identical, in that the highest peak of experience of the latter is the fullness of the former.[165] The Null Way represents the synthesis of the other three Ways. The difference, if there is any between the Way of Śiva and the Null Way, is mainly in terms of practice and attitude. They who follow the Way of Śiva have to commit themselves to certain do's and don'ts, whereas the Yogī of the Null Way is free from such restrictions.[166] This complete freedom that a Yogī of the Null Way enjoys is due to the grace of the Lord. It is a freedom that is characterised by the fulmination of energy, and the result is release from human bondage in terms of the experience of the submergence of the individual self in the Absolute.[167]

1. *The fall of grace:* One of the unique or special features of the Null Way is that a Yogī has spontaneous experience of the outpouring of the grace of the Lord, and the outpouring of grace is neither dim nor medium, but is of intense nature. As a result of this grace, the Yogī has the spontaneous experience of his own Śiva-nature,[168] which means that a Yogī realises that he is none other than Śiva. In philosophical terms it means that the individual entities are recognised as being but the self-unfolding of the Absolute. Since realisation of one's Śiva-nature is the result of divine grace, it means that no self-effort or exertion is involved in reaching this soteric goal of identity. It is entirely the result of God's gift in terms of his grace.[169] The people upon whom this unasked divine grace falls have neither the need to undertake the arduous practice of yogic methods nor is it necessary for them to perform Tantric rituals. As and when divine grace falls upon the Yogī, it falls upon him like a flash of lightning.

The grace of the Lord is present everywhere and every time. The very desire in the heart of the individual for God is the result of divine grace. It is not self-effort or external causes that determine the fall of divine grace. Grace is simply a loving and free gift of the Lord to the one who opens up his heart. If grace would be dependent on some condition, it would no more be grace. The grace of the Lord should be viewed as an uncaused cause of and for liberation. The postulate that grace is determined by external cause or by individual effort would contradict the very idea of God being absolutely free, nay freedom itself.[170] A person who receives the abundance of grace in its intensive form obtains complete release from human bondage at the time of its reception. The experience of bliss that emerges on account of the fall of grace is of cosmic nature (*jagadānanda*).

a. *The Highest State:* The final release from human bondage can either be gradual or immediate. It all depends as to what kind of grace falls upon the Yogī. If it is of intense nature, then release will be immediate. If, however, the fall of grace is dim or of medium nature, the release from bondage will not be immediate but may be realised over many births. The kind of liberation that a Yogī of the Null Way obtains is the

result of intense grace, and liberation has to be spontaneous and immediate.

The final phase of liberation that the Yogī of the Null Way obtains is characterised by such an experience in which the entire order of objectivity is absorbed by the subjectivity of the subject. Abhinava speaks of this liberation thus:

> Even though the Master of the universe always shines in us as our Self, nevertheless His true nature is not recognised in its transcendence and in its sovereignty; the heart is not full of the plenitude of his life. But when the soul becomes aware of the true freedom of the Self and of its liberation from this life, perfection will be attained.[171]

It should be noted that the Yogī of the Null Way is not so much interested in his release from the clutches of bondage as much as in the realisation of the Self in its highest state, perfection and fullness. The highest state is said to be that of Śiva. A person who remains aware of this state in all his actions and ways of thinking, always abides in the highest state of Śiva.[172] A Yogī who has realised the state of Śiva is considered as the liberated-in-life (*jīvanmukta*).[173]

b. *On the way:* The first two ways, namely, the Individual Way and the Way of Energy, do not terminate in the final realisation of liberation, viz., liberation-in-life. The followers of these two respective ways still possess desires for carnal pleasures, and so are accordingly bound by their physical and mental environment. However the Yogī has the possibility of achieving a spiritual state whereby he can free himself from the impact of phenomenal categories of existence. The Yogī of the Individual Way has no possibility at all of achieving the state of identity with Śiva. His spiritual progress comes to a standstill at a place from where the process of manifestation of the phenomenal world begins. It is only the grace of the Lord that enables the Yogī of this way to have some kind of intimacy with God.

The Yogī of the Way of Energy, however, is much more advanced spiritually. He reaches the peak of experience in terms of absorption in energy. It is from this point of experience that the Yogī goes no further, viz., he is unable to move any further. It is the grace of the Lord alone that can lead the Yogī

of this path to the union with God. Insofar as the Yogī of the Way of Śiva is concerned, he is very fortunate in attaining the state of immersion in Śiva. He only has the experience of Śiva as Light. He attains knowledge but remains destitute of absolute freedom. The nature of his joy is that of a joy that is deliberate and conscious (*cidānanda*).[174] It is the Yogī of the Null Way who really is blessed with the abundance of divine grace. The Yogī of this path has the experience of the fullness of Śiva. He not only experiences the mystical union with Śiva, but also is endowed with Śiva's energy. He experiences both pure awareness and total inner freedom. Having realised identity with Śiva, the Yogī's plenitude is of cosmic order. His experience of joy is of cosmic order, for his experience is characterised by the perfect unity of Śiva and his energy.[175]

Tantricism does not make any division or distinction between the secular life and the mystical life. Ordinary forms of experience are given as much importance as are those that pertain to mystical life. In the order of things Abhinava gives first preference to ordinary experiences; second place of importance is accorded to the supersensuous experiences, and the last place is given to experiences that result from religious rituals and worship.[176] It is that the Yogī is able to elevate himself to the ultimate mystical experience of the Absolute because of his ordinary experiences. Secular life is not considered, in Tantricism, as an obstacle on the way to mystical life. The belief is so entertained because the substratum of everything is said to be the Self. Absolute is not simply bliss; rather bliss is the result of the sensual enjoyment in the sense that the beginning is made with the senses. Says Abhinava:

> The hero (*vīra-sādhaka*), in availing himself of the three prohibited means—meat, wine and sexual enjoyment—becomes a *brahmacārin* (celibate) . . . and the *brahman* is bliss and the bliss resides in the body thanks to these three.[177]

The liberated-in-life is the one whose ignorance has been totally removed, and the destruction of ignorance is caused through inner purification, which is achieved by cultivating the Tantric way. It is upon the removal of ignorance that

perfect unity with Śiva as light and energy of the Self is realised.

> He that has burst the bonds of ignorance, whose doubts have passed away, who has overcome delusion, from whom merit and guilt have vanished, is redeemed, though he is still united with the body.[178]

The Tantric concept of liberation need not be interpreted in negative terms, which means that for a Tāntrika liberation is not merely freedom from human bondage. For him liberation has a positive aspect, which is expressed in terms of fullness (*pūrṇatvā*). Thus liberation as freedom means the realisation of the state of fulness of Being, a state in which imperfections or lacks are completely absent. As a state of fullness, liberation thereby denotes the bliss that comprehends the joy of both the senses and of the soteric release. This liberative joy or bliss comes about upon the revelation of one's own essential nature. The liberated, thus, views the world as the reflection of the Self. Says Abhinava:

> The man who has continuously practised burying (*samāveśa*) himself in Śiva and has fully recognised His Energies of knowledge and activity as being the pure freedom of the Lord, can then know and do all the desires even though he is still associated with the body. He is not only deified, in the ordinary sense of the word, but he is fundamentally free because he uses at will the divine powers belonging to Parameśvara and lives in eternal freedom.[179]

The liberated Yogī is considered as a glorified soul on account of him having discovered the splendour of Being within. Upon the realisation of the fulness of Being, the Yogī experiences the presence of divine fulness in everything that he perceives and feels. No more caught in the cares of the world, he cares for nothing except that he remains buried in the bliss of Being. Perceiving the presence of Being everywhere, he thereby looks at his own body as the temple of God.

> His own body . . . is a temple, viz., the seat of Consciousness (*saṃvid*), the home of the divine Self. As a temple has windows, so the body has its organs of sense . . . the whole phenomenal world is to the thinker a temple of His own indwelling Consciousness.[180]

References

1. See G. Tucci, *The Religion of Tibet*, London, 1980, p. 50.
2. Cf. *Hevajra-tantra*, ed. and trans. D.L. Snellgrove, 2 vols., London, 1959, 1: 63-66; *Guhyasamāja-tantra*, ed. B. Bhattacharya, Baroda, 1931, p. 6; *Sekoddeśa-ṭīkā*, ed. N.E. Carelli, Baroda, 1941, pp. 23 ff.
3. *Jñānasiddhi*, ed. B. Bhattacharya, Baroda, 1929, 13.9.12; *Prajñopāya-viniścayasiddhi*, ed. B. Bhattacharya, Baroda, 1929, 3.9.16.
4. It is interesting to note the views of Agehananda Bharati concerning the difference between Tantric and non-Tantric ideology. He writes: "There is decidedly such a thing as a common Hindu and Buddhist tantric ideology, and I believe that the real difference between tantric and non-tantric is methodological: tantra is psycho-experimental interpretation of non-tantric traditions; moralizing, and other be-good cliche's are set aside to a far greater extent in tantrism than in other doctrines. By pasycho-experimental I mean 'given to experimenting with one's own mind,' not in the manner of the speculative philosopher or the poet, but rather in the fashion of a would-be psychoanalyst who is himself being analysed by some senior men in the trade." *The Tantric Tradition*, London, 1965, p. 20.
5. ArthurÁvalon and Ellen Avalon, *Hymns to the Goddess*, Madras, 1952: *bhairavī-stotra*, v. 13.
6. Ibid., *tārāśatakam*, v. 1.
7. Ibid., *annapūrṇā-stotra*, v. 11.
8. Ibid., v. 12.
9. *Ṛgveda*, 10.71.9; *Atharvaveda*, 10.7.42.
10. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 5.2.70.
11. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 5 vols., Calcuta, 1956, 4: 211. Although a variety of definitions are available concerning the term *tantra*, the most penetrating definition, however, is that of H.V. Guenther. He writes: "It is by stipulating a meaning for the 'tantra' that the ways of the Hindus and the Buddhists part, the former defining it is 'systematization' and the latter as 'continuity' and 'integration'. . . . (The last two) definitions are interpretations of the Sanskrit word *prabandha* by which Tantra has been explained in the *Guhyasamāja*. . . . There we read:

   " 'Tantra' is continuity, and is the threefold: Ground, Actuality, and Inalienableness. The term 'ground' refers to the tantric path, 'actuality' to the experiencing individual or *yogin*

and 'inalienableness' to the goal or *nirvāṇa*." *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 156.

12. *Mahābhāṣya*, 4.2.60.
13. Śaṃkara on the *Brahmasūtra*, 2.2.11, 32.
14. The *Pañcatantra* is a collection of short stories.
15. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 5: 211.
16. Sir John Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, eighth edition, Madras, 1975, p. 34.
17. The term *sādhanā* in general means any kind of practice, whether secular or religious, that terminates in the attainment of proficiency. In Tantricism the term, however, has a specific meaning. The term means such practices that are characterised by ritual, meditative techniques, postures, utterance of mystical formulas, breath-control, etc.
18. The term *siddhi* signifies the accomplishment of any undertaking, and in Tantricism it denotes the realisation of such goals for which the Tantric methods have been employed. See *Yoginī-tantra*, 4; *Śāradātilaka-tantra*, 23.123 ff.
19. S.C. Das, *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 318.
20. See M.B. Jhaveri, *Comparative and Critical Study of Mantrasastra*, Ahmedabad, 1944.
21. Gopīnātha Kavirāja, *Bhāratīya Saṃskṛti aur Sādhanā*, 1963, part 1, chap. 17.
22. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 5: 227-40. Tantricism does not so much concern itself with the philosophical questions of life as much as with the practical aspects of religion, viz., with the religious experiences. Being practice-oriented, Tantricism at times has shown hostility towards religious speculation and asceticism. This marked opposition towards abstract modes of thought and asceticism reached its zenith particularly among the Siddhas. Says the *Kulārṇava-tantra*, 5: 48: "Donkeys and other animals wander about naked, too. Does that make them yogins?" Since liberation is seen in terms of spontaneity (*sahaja*), it is of no use to engage in the scholastic disputes or to practice tortuous forms of asceticism. Points out Saraha: "The childish yogins like the Tirthikas and others can never find out their own nature . . . One has no need of Tantra and Mantra, or of the images or the Dhāraṇīs . . . all these are causes of confusion. In vain does one try to gain Mokṣa by meditation. . . . All are hypnotised by the system of *jhānas* (meditation), but none cares to realise his own Self." S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 64-65.
23. See G. Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of Mandala*, London, 1961.

24. See P.H. Pott, *Yoga and Tantra*, The Hague, 1966.
25. See B. Bhattacharya, *Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism*, Delhi, 1980; John Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*, New York, 1970; Gopīnātha Kavirāja, *Tāntrika Vāṅmaya mein Śaktidṛṣṭi*, Patna, 1963.
26. *Ānandalaharī*, v. 1.
27. *Kulārṇava-tantra*, 1. 110.
28. Alex Weyman, "Totemic Beliefs in Buddhist Tantras," in: *History of Religions*, 1, 1, 1961, pp. 81 ff.
29. See Sir John Woodroffe, *The Serpent Power*, sixth edition, Madras, 1958.
30. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilisation*, ed. Joseph Campbell, New York, 1946, p. 120.
31. *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, v. 8.
32. Ibid.
33. S.B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 107.
34. Gauḍapāda, *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, 1.6.7.
35. *Tantrāloka*, 1.24.
36. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 1.1.2.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 1.52.
39. Ibid., 1.54.
40. Ibid., 1.59.60.
41. Ibid., 2.16.
42. *Mālinī-vijayavārttika*, 1.7.63.
43. *Śivadṛṣṭi*, 5.105-9.
44. *Tantrāloka*, 2.17.
45. Ibid., 1.80.
46. Ibid., 3.4.
47. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā*, 1.5.1; 5.10.
48. *Tantrāloka*, 14.24.
49. Ibid., 9.149.
50. Ibid.,1.61, 79, 80, 92; 3.196, 206; 4.10; 9.14.
51. Ibid., 3.14.
52. *Īśvara-pratyabijñā-vimarśinī*, 2.3.5.
53. See *Parātriśikā-vivaraṇa*.
54. *Tantrāloka*, 1.25.
55. *Tantrāloka-viveka*, 1.36.
56. *Tantrāloka*, 1.37.38.
57. Ibid., 1.40.
58. Ibid., 1.45.
59. Ibid., 1.47.
60. Ibid., 1.41.

61. Ibid., 1.50.
62. See *Mālinī-vijaya-tantra.*
63. *Tantrāloka,* 13.103.
64. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā,* 3.1.3.
65. *Tantrāloka,* 13.220.
66. Ibid., 9.65-66.
67. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā,* 3.2.4.
68. *Tantrāloka,* 9.9-10.
69. *Īśvara-prtyabhijñā-vimarśinī,* 2.2.9.
70. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā,* 3.1.9.
71. Ibid., 3.2.19.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., 3.2.20.
74. *Tantrāloka,* 6.186.
75. Ibid., 1.156.
76. *Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta, v. 48.
77. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī,* 2.3.17.
78. Ibid.
79. *Tantrāloka,* 1.173-75.
80. Agehananda Bharati has explained the wide-ranging meaning of *mantra* thus: "A *mantra* is quasi-morpheme or a series of quasi-morphemes, or a series of mixed, genuine and quasi-morphemes arranged in coventional patterns, based on codified esoteric tradition, and passed on from one proceptor to one disciple in the course of a prescribed initiation ritual." Op. cit., p. 111.

    This explanation of mantra is too general and does not define it in terms of its function. A mantra functions at three levels, namely, propitiation, acquisition and identification. The function of a mantra, in the context of Tantric Yoga, is at the level of identification.

    It is because of mantra's identificatory function in Tantricism that an elaborate system of condensed (*bīja*) forms of mantra have been developed. Mircea Eliade (op. cit., p. 214) tells us that "Each God . . . and each degree of sanctity have a *bīja-mantra,* 'a mystical sound,' which is their 'seed,' their 'support'—that is, their very being. By repeating this *bīja-mantra* in accordance with the rules, the practitioner appropriates its ontological essence, concretely and directly assimilates the God, the state of sanctity, etc. Sometimes an entire metaphysic is contained in a mantra."
81. See *Anubhavanivedana* of Abhinavagupta.
82. Eliade, op. cit., p. 215.
83. *Chāndogyopaniṣad,* 2.23.3.

84. *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta, chap. 13.
85. Ibid.; *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 42, 81, 90-91, 130-45, 156-57; *Mahārthamañjarī*, vv. 46, 49-50.
86. See T.A. Gopīnātha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 2 vols., Madras, 1914; Sir John Woodroffe, *The Garland of Letters*, third edition, Madras, 1955.
87. Tucci, in his *Theory and Practice of Maṇḍala* (p. 23), speaks of *maṇḍala* in more specific terms. He writes: "It is, above all, a map of the cosmos. It is the whole universe in its essential plan, in its process of emanation and of re-absorption. The universe not only in its inert spatial expense, but as temporal revolution and both as a vital process which develops from an essential Principle and rotates round a central axis, Mount Semeru, the axis of the world on which the sky rests and which sinks its roots into the mysterious substratum."

    The practitioner, at the level of meditation, has to enter into the *maṇḍala* with the intention of appropriating it. Through assimilation, there comes a state of experience whereby the total identification between the two is realised. Eliade (op. cit., p. 225) writes: "By mentally entering the *maṇḍala* the yogin approches his own 'center,' and this spiritual exercise can be understood in two senses: (1) to reach the center the yogin re-enacts and masters the cosmic process, for *maṇḍala* is an image of the world; (2) but since he is engaged in meditation and not in ritual, the yogin, starting from his iconographic 'support,' can find the *maṇḍala* in his own body."
88. See J. Gonda, "Mudrā," in: *Ex-orbe religionum Studia*, G. Widengren, 2, Leiden, 1972; Tyra de Klee, *Mudrā*, London, 1924.
89. *Tantrāloka*, 15.159; *Netra-tantra*, 20.36.
90. *Kulārṇava-tantra*, 6.7.
91. There are various kinds of *nyāsa*. We have the sixfold *nyāsa* (*ṣoḍa-nyāsa*) of Gaṇeśa, *graha* (planets), *nakṣatra* (stars), Yoginī, *rāśi* (constellation), and *pīṭha*. We also have sixfold *nyāsa* of *prapañca* (world), *bhuvana* (universe), *murti*, *mantra*, *devatā*, and *mātrikā*.
92. See *Śāradātilaka-tantra*, ed. M.J. Bakshi, with the commentary of Rāghavabhaṭṭa, *Padārthadarśa*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 9.
93. Ibid., pp. 137-38.
94. The purpose of visualisation is "to gain control of the mind, become skilled in creating mental construction, make contact with powerful forces . . . and achieve higher states of consciousness. . . . It produces quick results by utilizing forces familiar to man only at the deeper level of consciousness, of which ordinary people rarely become aware except in dreams."

J. Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet*, New York, 1970, p. 48.

95. The process of visualisation is described thus: "Beginners have to create the parts separately and, as more and more are envisioned, those created first vanish. It is as though a sculptor's statue were to begin melting while he was still at work on it. With practice, however, the adept learns to invoke instantaneously a figure complete in all its parts. . . . Some visualizations require the conjuring of a whole panorama of brilliantly coloured figures." Ibid., p. 86.

The *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā* (6.2-8) explains the procedure of Tantric visualisation thus: "Let the (yogin) imagine that there is a great sea in his own heart; that in the middle of that (sea) there is an island of precious stones, the sand of which is pulverized gems; that on sides of it are *nipa*-trees laden with sweet flowers. . . . In the middle of the grove let the yogin imagine the beautiful *kalpa*-tree with four branches representing the four Vedas, and that it is laden with flowers and fruits. Beetles are humming there and cuckoos are calling. Beneath that (tree) let the yogin imagine a great platform of precious gems. Let the yogin (further) imagine that in the middle there is a beautiful throne inlaid with jewels. On that (throne) let the yogin imagine that his particular deity as taught by the teacher (who still instructs him as to) the appropriate form, adornment, and vehicle of the deity."

96. Having a positive view of the body, Tantricism does not, like other religious ideologies, suffer from mind-body dualism. It does not give priority to mind over body; rather it thinks that both mind and body are complementary to each other insofar as spiritual development is concerned. It is not possible to achieve spiritual development solely by depending upon one component. Rather cooperation from both of them is needed for the deepening of spiritual vision. It is within this conceptual framework that the body for a Tāntrika is not simply a source of suffering or spiritual degradation, as is the case with such religious ideologies that follow renunciatory ideology. This negative view of the body is beautifully depicted in the *Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad* (1.3). It says: "Venerable, in this ill-smelling, unsubstantial body (which is nothing but) a conglomerate of bone, skin, sinew, muscle, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus, tears, rheum, faeces, urine, wind, bile, and phlegm, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? In this body, which is afflicted with desire, anger, greed, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the desirable, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease,

sorrow, and like—what is the good of enjoyment of desires?"

This negative view of the body is completely rejected by Tantricism, and one of its schools, namely, the school of Haṭhayoga, has based its entire spiritual praxis upon the wellbeing of the body. Tantricism views the wellbeing of the body from two perspectives. First, the body is seen as representing the totality of experiences of life, and therefore is considered as an inseparable part of Tantric praxis. Second, it is believed that the body, being the container of the divine forces, can be, through yogic methods, transformed into the divine body (*divya-śarīra*). Accordingly is body said to be "intended for his (viz., the Yogī's) enjoyment and emancipation. It resembles a sage's grove. One's own body . . . is (meant for) blisss, not suffering." (*Yogavasiṣṭha*, 4.23.2.) The body is viewed as a fit instrument for the realisation of divine bliss precisely because it is said to be "the dwelling-place of Viṣṇu, bestowing perfection on all embodied (existents)." (*Yogaśikhā Upaniṣad*, 5.4.) "This (body) is the abode of the immortal, bodiless Self" *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 8.12.1.

97. See *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

98. There are various accounts to be found in the texts concerning the mystical channels of the subtle body. The following texts may be consulted: *Triśikhābrāhmaṇopaniṣad*, v. 76; *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 2.14; *Gorakṣa-śataka*, vv. 8.27-31; *Gorakṣa-paddhati*, v. 12; *Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā*, 4.8.

99. The esoteric interpretation of the channels abounds in the Tantric texts. In one of the texts, namely, the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* (1-3), the description of the gracious vein is given in the following terms:

"In the space outside the Meru (viz., the spinal cord), placed on the left and the right, are the two Shiras (viz., channels), Shashi and Mihira (the Moon and the Sun). The gracious vein, whose substance is the threefold *guṇas* (viz., lucid, passionate and dark), is in the middle. She is the form of Moon, Sun and Fire (i.e., the channels *citriṇī, vajriṇī* and *suṣumṇā*). Her body, a string of Dhatūrā (*Dhatura fastuos*) flowers, extended from the middle of the Kānda (the root of the channels. Kānda means 'bulb' to the Head, and Vajra inside Her extends, shining, from the Meddhra (penis) to the Head.

"Inside Her is *citriṇī*, who is lustrous with the lustre of the *Praṇava* (viz., the mystic syllable *Oṃ*) and attainable in Yoga by Yogīs. She (*citriṇī*) is subtle as a spider's thread, and pierces all the lotuses, which are placed within the backbone, and is pure intelligence. She (*citriṇī*) is beautiful by reason of these

(lotuses) which are strung on her. Inside her (*citriṇī*) is the *brahma-nāḍī* which extends from the orifice of the mouth of Hara (*śiva-svayambhū-liṅga*) to the place beyond, where Ādideva is.

"She (*citriṇī*) is beautiful like a chain of lightning and fine like a (lotus) fiber, and shines in the mind of the sages. She is extremely subtle; the awakener of pure knowledge; the embodiment of all bliss, whose true nature is pure Consciousness (*śuddha-bodha-svabhāva*). The *brahma-dvāra* (viz., the door to *brahman*) shines in her mouth. This place is the entrance to the region sprinkled by ambrosia, and is called the Knot as also the mouth of *suṣumṇā*."

100. The *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels are not only equated to exhalation and inhalation, but have also been considered as the subtle energy of the body. Symbolically the *iḍā* channel represents Śakti, whereas the *piṅgalā* channel is representative of Puruṣa. In Buddhism the *lalanā* (viz., *iḍā*) and the *rasanā* (viz., *piṅgalā*) are seen as the carriers of semen and ovum respectively (see S.B. Dasgupta, *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, 1950, p. 119). The semen is considered as the essence of Śiva and the Moon, whereas ovum (blood) is the symbol of Śakti and of the Sun (ibid., p. 172). In the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels have been compared to the day and night respectively, and, above all, the channels represent the inhalation (*prāṇa*) and exhalation (*apāna*).

101. For a detailed account concerning the Wheels of Energy (*cakra*), see *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*.

102. The energetic mass, known as *kuṇḍalinī*, has been described under various forms and shapes. She as Goddess or Energy has been compared to a snake. It is the image of snake that has been used as a means of describing as to what *kuṇḍalinī* is or is not. The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* (3.9) describes the *kuṇḍalinī* thus: "Kuṭilaṅgī (the crooked bodied), Kuṇḍalinī, Bhujaṅgī (a she-serpent), Śakti, Īśvarī, Kuṇḍālī, Arundhatī. As a door is opened with a key, so the Yogī opens the door of *mukti* (liberation) by opening Kuṇḍalinī by means of Haṭhayoga." *Kuṇḍalinī*, being identical with *Oṃ* and *Śabdabrahman*, is in possession of such attributes that pertain to the Absolute. See for further details, *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 4.12-14; *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, 3.1; 4.10; *Śāradātilaka-tantra*, 1.14, 53-55; 24.34; *Gorakṣa-śataka*, v. 49.

103. *Gorakṣa-saṃhitā*, 1.47-51.

104. *Tantrāloka*, 8.163.

105. Ibid., 1.203.

106. Ibid., 1.182.

107. Ibid., 1.186.
108. *Paramārthasāra*, vv. 90-102.
109. *Tantrāloka*, 13.159.
110. Ibid., 13.196.
111. S.B. Dasgupta, "Some Later Yogic Schools," in: *Cultural Heritage of India*, 4: 291.
112. *Śivasūtra*, 3.14.
113. See *Yogasūtra*, 1.38.
114. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, New York, 1958, pp. 53-54.
115. *Yogasūtra*, 1.49.
116. Eliade, op. cit., pp. 96-99.
117. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
118. See *Anubhavanivedana* of Abhinavagupta.
119. *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 78-79; cf. *Yogasūtra*, 2.52-53.
120. *Yogasūtra*, 3.1-2.
121. *Iśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 5.9.
122. *Tantrāloka*, 3.211.
123. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 24.
124. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdyam*, *sūtra* 15.
125. Swami Pratyagātmānanda, "Tantra as a Way of Realization," in: *Cultural Heritage of India*, 4: 236-38.
126. *Śivadṛṣṭi*, 1.8-11.
127. *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 43-46, 59, 61-63, 75, 80, 113, 115, 145.
128. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 3.
129. *Paramārthasāra*, v. 52.
130. *Tantrāloka*, 5.71.
131. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 69.
132. *Parātriśikā-vivaraṇa*, 5.1.
133. *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 66-67.
134. Ibid., vv. 72-74.
135. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 1.5.
136. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 68.
137. *Tantrāloka-viveka*, 3.170.
138. Agehananda Bharati, *Tantric Tradition*, New York, 1970, p. 244. The five ingredients (*tattva*) are known as Five Ms on account of the fact that each ingredient begins with the letter *m*. All these ingredients are used in a Tantric ritual called the Worship of the Wheel (*cakra-pūjā*). The five ingredients are liquor (*madya*), meat (*māṃsa*), fish (*matsya*), coitus (*maithuna*), and gesture or fried beans (*mudrā*).
139. *Tantrāloka*, 29.73-74.
140. *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 68-69.
141. *Tantrāloka*, 29.67, 74, 77.

142. *Kulārṇava-tantra*, vv. 111-12.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. *Tantrāloka*, 29.68-71.
146. Ibid., 29.70-72.
147. Ibid., 29.72-73.
148. Ibid., 29.42-44, 56-60.
149. Ibid., 2.164-65.
150. *Vijñānabhairava*, vv. 140-44.
151. Ibid., v. 10.
152. *Parātriśikā*, p. 35.
153. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 24; *Tantrāloka*, 1.83-88.
154. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdyam*, *sūtra* 17.
155. *Paramārthasāra*, v. 32.
156. *Tantrāloka*, 6.10.
157. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 89.
158. *Tantrāloka-viveka*, 6.10.
159. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 149.
160. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdyam*, 4.
161. Kṣemarāja, *Śivasūtra-vimarśinī*, 2.2.
162. *Mahārthamañjarī*, 5.13.
163. *Tnatrāloka*, 2.3, 39-40.
164. Ibid., 1.107-8.
165. Ibid., 1.182.
166. Ibid., 3.286.
167. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdyam*, 2.
168. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 1.7.14.
169. *Tantrāloka*, 8.173.
170. See *Mālinī-vijaya-vārttika*.
171. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 6.2.2.
172. *Tantrāloka*, 4.206.
173. *Vijñānabhairava*, v. 142.
174. Ibid., vv. 15.65-66.
175. *Tantrāloka*, 5.356.
176. *Śivadṛṣṭi*, 1; *Tantrāloka*, 1.149; *Paramārthasāra*, vv. 74-80.
177. *Tantrāloka*, 29.97-98.
178. *Paramārthasāra*, v. 61; cf. *Pratyabhijñāhṛdyam*, *sūtra* 16.
179. *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*, 4.1.15.
180. *Paramārthasāra*, v. 74.

6

Haṭhayoga and the Culture of the Body

IT WAS TANTRICISM that, for the first, revolutionised Indian thought when it, in opposition to renunciatory religious thought of Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Jainism, opted for a view a life that affirmed the world by assigning a central role to the human body in its soteriology. This Tantric affirmative view of the body as well as of the world was given further push when Haṭhayoga,[1] an offshoot of Tantricism, centered its thinking upon the wellbeing of the body. Haṭhayoga came to believe that there is no possibility for a Yogī to make any spiritual advance unless the wellbeing of the body is given due consideration. It is in the context of this understanding that a number of such techniques[2] have been used by the employment of which the human body is expected to become a fit instrument for arriving at the soteric experience of liberation. In order to understand the Tantric, and thereby Haṭhayogic, affirmative view of the body, we will have to give a graphic account as to how Brāhmaṇism in general has treated the subject of the body.

The Concept of the Body in Brāhmaṇism

One of the cosmological theories of Brāhmaṇism that is most relevant and suitable to our theme is the theory of the Cosmic Egg (*brahmāṇḍa* or the Egg of Brahman). The entire univese that we see, feel and touch, according to this theory, has originated from the Egg of Brahman, or should we say, the universe, prior to its emergence, has been existing potentially

in the Egg of Brahman.[3] The aim of this theory is to explain that the origin of the universe has not occurred *ex nihilo*, but has emerged from the existing latent seed. The theory of the origin of the universe from a pre-existing seed was given further push when in the *Mahābhārata*[4] is asserted that the manifest forms of life have emerged from such primal elements as, for example, mind, ether, air, fire, water, and earth. If so, it means that the cosmic manifestation consists of the primal elements that must have been existing potentially in the Egg, and so the Egg is seen as the most apt symbol of the cosmos. Since the Egg is the source of every manifest category, so it is but natural to equate it with the Absolute, namely, *brahman*. Thus in one stroke is established a non-dualism in terms of which the microcosm is equated with the macrocosm. If microcosm and macrocosm are identical, it means that the body is a manifest form of the macrocosm, and accordingly must be treated as the most holy object. It is from this conceptual thinking from which the Tantric affirmative disposition towards the body has emerged. Haṭhayoga has simply enlarged the scope of this Tantric view of the body by making it the centre of its praxis.

Contrary to this Tantric affirmative view of the body, there is an another view that looks at the body as an hindrance in the way to spiritual development. This negative view of the body has its source in a viewpoint that looks at the body as being impure, and therefore not worthy of any consideration. The source of this negative view is to be found in the renunciatory theory that Śramaṇism gave rise, and which Mahāvīra and Buddha propagated. Brāhmaṇism, too, could not escape from its influence, and accordingly gave a respectable place to the theology of renunciation in its over-all understanding as to what constitutes authentic spirituality. And the Upaniṣads think that the abandonment of phenomenal world is a *sine qua non* if soteric goal of liberation is to be reached. The world of Matter, or should we say of Nature, is to be abandoned because of it being unreal. It is the epistemological vision that considers *brahman* alone as real that is responsible for giving rise to the belief that the world as an unreal entity has to be renounced.

The conception of *brahman* as real and the world as unreal is based upon a non-dualistic view of reality. According to this view, reality is one, and apart from the one everything else is appearance, which means that *brahman* alone is ontologically real. If both *brahman* and the world are accepted as being real, then we are giving rise to a dualism in which both not only are real, but are equal. It would mean that we have opposite entities that are equally real, and such a view is not logically tenable. But we experience that the world to be transient, and that which is transient connot ontologically be considered real. A real is that that never changes or perishes. Non-change is the main mark of the real. Since *brahman* never undergoes any modification or change, so it alone should be considered ontologically real. Apart from *brahman* everything, thus, turns out be unreal. Even if some degree of reality is accorded to the changing world, it can only be a contingent one. The very contingency of the world tells us that it is relative, and so should be treated as being unreal. The world, thus, is as unreal as is an illusory snake that is superimposed upon a rope. An illusory superimposed snake upon the rope is considered to be real to the extent the erroneous knowledge concerning the rope as snake persists. Once rope-knowledge dawns, the superimposed snake vanishes. Similarly the erroneous conception of the world as being real disappears the moment we have knowledge of *brahman*. We come to know the falsity (*mithyā*) of the world the moment erroneous knowledge, which is equal to ignorance (*avidyā*), is negated.

Since *brahman* alone is real, it means that *brahman* is the basis of every changing phenomenon as well as of one's own subjectivity, which in theological terms is called the Self (*ātman*). As *brahman* and *ātman* are identical, so the question that arises is: What is it that transmigrates, on account of karman causality, from one existence to another? It cannot be the Self, because the Self is identical with the Absolute. It is to avoid this difficulty that the doctrine of individual self (*jīvātman*) has been postulated. It is the individualised self, though as unreal as is the superimposed snake upon the rope, that really transmigrates from one existence to another. It is the trans-

migration of this false self from which soteric liberation is sought. It is upon gaining liberation that the individual comes to know that he never was in bondage, because the Self is *a priori* assumed to be identical with the Absolute.

It is the causal doctrine of action that is made use of in explaining as to how the process of transmigration of the individualised self is initiated. The theory of action explains as to how the present existence is determined by the deeds that have been performed during past existences, and how the deeds of the present existence are going to determine the future form of life. Since endless series of births and deaths is characterised by the bondage of pain, so it is natural that no form of birth is seen as being beneficial. Moreover, whatever be the form of life, it is always an embodied one. As embodied existence denotes connection with materiality, so materiality of any kind is disfavoured. With regard to human existence it means that it undergoes the ever-recurring chain of rebirth to the extent existence remains associated with materiality. Thus the physical body, on account of its materiality, is seen as a great hindrance in the way of soteric liberation from bondage. The only way left is to dissociate existence from the body. It is upon dissociating existence from materiality that soteric freedom from bondage can be achieved. It is this view concerning human bondage that has led Brāhmaṇism to opt for a theological viewpoint that adheres to the principle of renunciation.

It becomes clear from what we have said so far that the material world, in which we live and exist, is not considered as being a place worth living. It also means that the human body, being of the nature of matter, has to be discarded if the goal of liberation is to be achieved. Whether it be yogic or Vedāntic reflection, both of them are permeated by the spirit of renunciation. This spirit of renunciation was given a practical content by the classical Yoga when it devised such methods or techniques whereby introversion of consciousness could be actualised. And the methods of meditation have been so devised as to result in the rupture of consciousness as well as of the senses from the external world. Once consciousness and the senses turn away from the world, there occurs inwardness of consciousness in terms of which senses are made

non-functional. Once consciousness completely abides in itself, it results in what is called liberation (*mokṣa, mukti*). This negative view with regard to the body is beautifully expressed in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* (8.12.1) thus: "This body is mortal, appropriated by death, but within it dwells the deathless, bodiless Self (*ātman*). Verily, there is no freedom from pleasure and pain for one while he is embodied. Verily, which one is bodiless, pleasure and pain do not touch him."

The Role of the Body in Haṭhayoga

To controvert this Brāhmaṇical negative view of the body, Tantricism laid down such a theoretical foundation whereby it became possible for such Tantric offshoot as Haṭhayoga to develop an ideology that is entirely centered on the wellbeing of the body. Tantricism achieves this feat of looking at the body positively by interpreting the non-dualism theistically. In looking at the non-dual Absolute as being characterised by inner dynamism, Tantricism thereby makes it possible theoretically to speak of the material world as self-emanation of the Absolute. Thus the Tantric Absolute is endowed with innate creativity. When this creative impulse begins to stir (*spandanaṃ*) within the Absolute, there is initiated an impulse towards polarity, which, upon its actualisation, is spoken of as the Divine Couple, namely, Śiva and Śakti. It is through the power of Śakti that there occurs the creative emission of the universe from within Śiva. As the universe is the emission of Śiva, so the universe is nothing but Śiva itself. It is on the basis of looking at the universe as being the emission of Śiva that Tantricism has endeavoured to establish the identity between the macrocosm and the microcosm, which practically means that the world of matter is nothing else but the actual representation of Śiva. The objective world, thus, is not seen as a mere projection or construction of the mind, as do the Vedāntins of Śaṃkara school, but is considered literally to be Śiva itself. It is upon the basis of this theistically oriented non-dualism of Tantricism that the school of Haṭhyoga has constructed the edifice of its metaphysic.

It is commonly believed that it was Gorakhanātha, also known as Gorakṣa, who laid down the foundation of the school

of Haṭhayoga. As and when Gorakhanātha lived is not known. It is asserted that he must have lived between the tenth and twelfth centuries of our era. Gorakhanātha has gained such a popular place in the imagination of people that it has become difficult to differentiate the Gorakhanātha of legend from the one that actually lived among the people. The thrust of most of the legends is to delineate the fact that Gorakhanātha was an asectic of extraordinary status. He is believed to have been responsible in establishing the sect of Nātha Yogīs, who also are known as the Kānphaṭa Yogīs.[5]

While adhering to the Brāhmaṇical view of karman-causality, it was but natural for Gorakhanātha to look at human existence in the world as being in bondage. As the follower of Tantric ideology, Gorakhanātha believed that the only suitable way of obtaining release from this bondage is to cultivate the path of Yoga. The kind of Yoga that he developed for this purpose is known as Haṭhayoga, or the Yoga of Exertion. The theoretical and practical aspects of this Yoga are to be found in such texts as the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*,[6] *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*, and the *Śiva-saṃhitā*.

It would not be out of place to mention that Gorakhanātha laid much emphasis upon such methods of Yoga that are oriented towards the culture of the body. The aim of these methods is to make the body as a suitable instrument for soteric liberation. Gorakhanātha received this tradition of relying upon the physical methods of Yoga from his teacher, namely, Matsyendranātha, who is believed to have begun the tradition of the Siddha Yogīs, viz., of such Yogīs who believed in the transubstantiation of the body. The attainment of the state of transubstantiation is equated with the state of immortality, or, should we say, with the state of non-death. It is this desire of the Siddha Yogīs that has formed the conceptual and practical background of Gorakhanātha's Haṭhayoga.

The Divine Descent

The Supreme Śiva manifests itself as this universe through its innate dynamic power (*śakti*), of which, at the practical level of religiosity, Goddess (Śakti) is the embodiment. It is thus Śiva and the Power of Śiva, namely, the Goddess, which is

constitutive of Divine Dyad. The self-manifestation of Supreme Śiva as this universe occurs through a process of descent, and this process of descent passes through five stages of *nija-śakti, parā-śakti, aparā-śakti, sūkṣma-śakti,* and *kuṇḍalinī-śakti.*[7] It is at the fifth stage of descent where the actualisation of Śiva as this universe is accomplished, which simultaneously results in the atomisation, in the form of *kuṇḍalinī*, of Śiva's power, namely, Śakti. In practical terms it means that Śakti is, as it were, so encaged at the base of the rectum in each individual as to make it dormant. This dormant state of energy has been linked to the coiled snake. The atomic condition of energy, on the one hand, represents the self-manifestation of Śiva and, on the other hand, is seen as denoting the destruction of Śiva's power itself. Reverse to the process of manifestation is that of withdrawal or dissolution, which is linked to the awakening of this dormant energy, called *kuṇḍalinī*. The very arousal of energy means two things: It denotes the dissolution of the manifest as well as the restoration of fulness to Śiva. In this manner is fulfilled the purpose of the doctrine of emptiness. It is a doctrine that says that Śiva empties himself of his divinity the moment he becomes the universe.

As the world and entities therein, including sentient beings, represent the manifest condition of Supreme Śiva, so it will not be out of place to say that this body must be treated as one of the best instruments for arriving at the ultimate soteriological state of liberation. And for Gorakhanātha this state of liberation signifies experientially the merger of Śiva and Śakti, of individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness, of microcosm and macrocosm.

The Supreme Śiva manifests itself as this universe not because of external or internal necessity, but because of its own free will (*icchā*). As Śiva through its innate energy descends downward and in terms of which it becomes the universe as well as atomises itself as *kuṇḍalinī* in the human body, likewise the ascent towards the Transcendent is realised when, through various yogic techniques, the dormant energy is aroused from her sleep. The awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* also denotes for an individual existent that he is no more in bondage because of him having realised complete merger in the

Absolute.

It is now clear that the human body, within the system of Haṭhayoga, is just not an object that has to be despised. The body has to be worshipped on account of it being the temple of God. In this context the following observation of Eliade may be taken note of: ". . . the Upaniṣadic and the post-Upaniṣadic pessimism and asceticism are swept away. Body is no longer the source of pain, but the most reliable and effective instrument at man's disposal for conquering death."[8] This view of the body gave rise, within the Nātha tradition, to a valuable insight, which is: It is not possible to attain soteric freedom from bondage apart from the body. How is it possible to engage in meditation without a body? It is this insight that is responsible in ascribing significant role to the body in the overall spiritual scheme of Haṭhayoga. Thus the preservation and wellbeing of the body has become one of the leitmotifs of Haṭhayoga.[9] For a Haṭhayogī body not only forms an integral part of spiritual praxis, but also can be so transubstantiated as to result in the attainment of the state of non-death. Transubstantiation or divinisation of the body would mean its immortality, and it is the attainment of immortality that has become the *sine qua non* for Haṭhayoga.

The Esoteric Physiology

The Tāntrikas, as also the Haṭhayogīs, have structured the layers of human body in such a manner as to lead to its triadic classification in terms of the gross body (*sthūla-* or *bhautika-śarīra*), the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*) and the causal body (*kāraṇa-śarīra*).[10] The outer layer of the body, which is of material nature, consists of the five elements as well as of the principle of life and of mind. It is the faculty of mind that is seen responsible in structuring as well as in determining the subjective traits of an individual. The next layer consists of the subtle body, which exists potentially prior to the formation of the gross body. It evolves, step by step, into a living entity.

The formation of the body, whether gross, subtle or causal, occurs due to the five innate traits within the Absolute. It is these five traits that determine causally the process of manifestation, and the traits are of the nature of goodness

(*sattva*), passionate (*rajas*), dullness (*tamas*), time (*kāla*), and life (*jīva*). These five traits have been so psychologised as to constitute the subjectivity of an individual. And these five traits in the individual express themselves as will (*icchā*), action (*kriyā*), pretension (*māyā*), temperament (*prakṛti*), and speech (*vāc*).

Further it is believed by the Haṭhayogīs that there are five determinant causes (*pratyakṣa-kāraṇapañcaka*) which, as subsidiary efficient causes, are responsible for the maintenance, development and renewal of the individual body. The influence, though imperceptible, of these determinant causes upon the body is said to be forceful, and accordingly their regualtion is considered to be necessary if the *telos* of life, which is liberation from bondage, is to be realised.

Though it is true to say that it is mind or will that makes the selection with regard to the performance of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, but the fact of the matter is that that their actualisation is accomplished through the various organs of the body. The body performs deeds, whether good or bad, through its various organs. Upon the performance of a deed, the deed in turn leaves its imprint upon the mind, and it is the imprint of the deed that determines the mental make up of an individual, which in popular language is called character or temperament. Thus it is in accordance with one's temperament that various kinds of actions ensue from an individual. It is the content of a deed that is thought to be responsible in determining the future destiny, in the form of rebirth, of an existent.

While accepting the Tantric insight concerning the importance of sexuality, the Nāthas accordingly have accepted the fact that sexuality, being universal in nature, is the most important factor in human existence. The Nāthas are of the view that the sexual urge (*kāma*) can be made use of for the good of the body if the seminal fluid is preserved through the practice of certain yogic techniques. The sexual urge within an individual is expressed by making use of certain symbols of Nature like the Moon (*candra*), the Sun (*sūrya*) and Fire (*agni*). The Moon is linked to the elixir of life, and therefore expresses clearly its association with the seminal fluid, because it is the

seminal fluid that is the source of life. The Sun and Fire are symbols of such powers within the body that enable an individual to assimilate and digest the food. These powers or forces within the body are seen directly affecting the development of mental vigour as well as the health of the body.

The above three cosmic powers, as represented by the Moon, the Sun and Fire, consist of seventeen, thirteen and eleven digits (*kalā*) respectively. The most important digit is said to be the seventeenth one on account of it being the symbol of perfect fulness, and so accordingly is identical with the nectar (*amṛta*) or immortality. The thirteenth digit represents the self-luminous (*sva-prakāśatā*) aspect of the Absolute, whereas the eleventh digit is characterised by pure light (*joyti*). It is by meditating upon these digits that a Yogī has the mystical vision of the unity of Being, which at the conceptual level is expressed in terms of identity between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

The internal physiological structure of Haṭhayoga is borrowed stock-and-barrel from Tantricism. It is asserted that the subtle body consists of innumerable mystical channels (*nāḍī*), which are thought of as being the main conduits for the circulation of various energies in the body. It is on account of these energies that the triadic structure of the body is maintained as well as preserved. It is through these channels that the winds (*prāṇa*) circulate in the body, and consequently the body remains alive. In the *Śivasaṃhitā* (2.1) some of the important channels have been linked to mystical rivers that flow from the Mount Meru, which itself is the symbol of *axis mundi*. For a Haṭhayogī these channels are conduits for the flow of mental, *prāṇic* and spiritual energies within the body.

Further it is asserted that the origin of these mystical channels is what is called "the cave of *kuṇḍalinī*"—cave being located at the base of the rectúm, which is technically referred to as the root wheel (*mūlādhāra-cakra*). From this centre, viz., from the cave of *kuṇḍalinī* (*mūla-kanda*), the channels spread out in all directions and cover the entire body. The most important mystical centre is located at the top of the head, which is known as the *sahasrāra-cakra* or the wheel with thousand petals. The centre is considered as the abode of Śiva,

and it is from this centre that the immortal nectar flows forth throughout the body. The other important mystical organ is the spinal cord on account of it being linked to the *axis mundi*. Accordingly it is spoken of as the stick of *brahman* (*brahma-daṇḍa*). It is within the spinal cord that the most important channel is found, which is the gracious vein (*suṣumṇā-nāḍī*). It is through this channel that the *kuṇḍalinī*, when aroused, ascends upwards toward the crown of the head. The other two channels that lie on either side of the spinal cord are the *piṅgalā* and the *iḍā*. It is through these channels that we inhale and exhale breaths. Also these three veins—*iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumṇā*—have respectively been linked to the three sacred rivers of Jamunā, Gaṅgā and Sarasvatī.[11] As the three rivers meet at Prayāga, also called Triveṇī (viz., the confluence of the three), so the three channels are seen to be intersecting each other at the command wheel (*ājñā-cakra*), which is located between the two eyebrows. The meeting-place of the channels is also spoken of as the *mukta-triveṇī*, or the meeting of the three that results in liberation (cf. *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 5.100).

Apart from the various mystical channels, there are ten winds (*daśa-vāyu*) that circulate within the body. A wind is a form of energy that sustains the body and thereby maintains the functioning of the various bodily organs. It is through the winds that such necessary materials are drawn from the outer environment that nourish and sustain the body and its various organs. The winds also help the elemental forces, as represented by the Moon, the Sun and Fire, in their proper functioning within the body. As such the wind is spoken of as vital energy (*prāṇa-śakti*) that keeps the body alive. Among the ten winds the most important ones are the incoming (*prāṇa*) and the outgoing breaths (*apāna*).[12]

It is asserted that the incoming breath is located in the heart, whereas the outgoing breath has its centre near the anus (*gudā*). The outgoing breath is responsible in activating that part of the body that is located below the waist, whereas the incoming breath is responsible in bringing in fresh air into the body. It also activates such organs that assimilate as well as metabolise the food that we eat. In doing so, this wind thereby transforms the eaten food into protoplasm. These two winds,

in association with the Moon, Sun and Fire as well as with *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels, are believed by the Yogī to be playing a very important role in sustaining the human body.

The Wheels of Energy

It is the belief of Tāntrikas that there are certain centres in the body that are very sensitive on account of them being the locations of what is called the wheels of energy (*cakra*). Most of the Tantric texts speak of the seven wheels of energy.[13] There are some authorities who speak only of six wheels of energy. According to them, the seventh wheel of energy, viz., the *sahasrāra-cakra*, cannot be considered as a wheel of energy on account of it being of transmundane nature. These wheels are seen as the centres of energy within the body, and have iconographically been depicted in geometrical designs, or as lotuses (*padma*), along the spinal cord. The following are the wheels of energy:

1. The *mūalādhāra-cakra* or the basic wheel of energy. This wheel of energy is believed to have its location at the base of the rectum. As being the support of all the wheels of energy in the body, it is accordingly spoken as being the root (*mūla*) and support (*ādhāra*) of all the wheels of energy. As the base and support of other wheels of energy, it has been identified with the element earth, because earth too is the sustaining source of everything that has life. The colour of this wheel is that of the burnished gold and consists of a lotus with four petals (cf. *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 5.60, 63). As the quality of the wheel is that of smell, so it is accordingly related to the organ of smell, namely, the nose. It is at this wheel where the *kuṇḍalinī*, in three and a half coils, lies in the state of dormancy (ibid., 5.57).[14] As a coiled snake, the *kuṇḍalinī* holds its tail in its mouth, and rests in the interior void of the gracious vein. The mantra that is associated with this Wheel is *aiṃ*.

2. The *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra* or the self-supporting wheel of energy. This wheel is located at the base of the sexual organ, and its predominant element is water. It is like a lotus with six petals (cf. *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 5.75). The colour of the wheel is red, and its main quality is that of taste. The presiding deity of the wheel is Viṣṇu, and its mantra is *vaṃ*.

3. The *maṇipūra-cakra* or the wheel of city of jewels. This is located in the region of the navel, and the element that is dominant is fire. The lotus of the wheel has ten petals, and the colour is golden. The deity of the wheel is Rudra and the mantra is that of *raṃ* (cf. ibid., 5.79).

4. The *anāhata-cakra* or the silent wheel of energy. This wheel is also known as the heart wheel of energy (*hṛt-cakra*).[15] Its very name tells us about the location of the sound, which is the heart. As the seat of vital breath, it is the centre of incoming breath. The lotus of the wheel has twelve petals (ibid., 5.83), and the colour is that of deep red. The main characteristic of the wheel is that of touch. The presiding deity of the wheel is Īśvara/Īśa, and the mantra is *klīṃ*.

5. The *viśuddha-cakra* or the pure wheel of energy. This wheel is located in the region of the throat (*kaṇṭha*). The element of this wheel is space with the quality of sound. The lotus of the wheel has sixteen petals, and the colour is golden with brilliance (ibid., 5.90). The presiding deity of the wheel is Sadāśiva, or the Eternal Śiva. The mantra is that of *auṃ*.

6. The *ājñā-cakra* or the command wheel of energy. This wheel is located between the two eyebrowas with a lotus of two petals. The presiding deity of the wheel is Śrīkaṇṭha, also called Śuklamahākāla.

As the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* channels are joined together at this wheel, so they are linked symbolically to two mystical rivers—Varaṇā and Asi—which, when joined together, becomes Vārāṇasī, the holy city of Śiva. Śiva as the Lord of the Universe, viz., as Viśvanātha, resides in this holy city of Vārāṇasī (ibid., 5.100, 103-7).

7. The *sahasrāra-cakra* or thousand-petalled wheel of energy. This wheel is located at the top of the head, also known as the abode of Brahman (*brahmasthāna*), or the wheel of liberation (*nirvāṇa-cakra*). As the Abode of Brahman/Śiva, it is at this place where Śakti, upon being aroused as the *kuṇḍalinī* in the *mūlādhāra-cakra*, merges in the absolute (*akula*). It is the aim of every Yogī to have the experience of this union of Śiva and Śakti, so that soteric liberation is realized. As the wheel represents the abode of the absolute (*akula, anuttara*), so it, according to the Hathayogīs, is considered to be transcendent

to all that that is phenomenal (ibid., 5.151).

In addition to the above six or seven wheels of energy, the Haṭhayogīs think that there are three more such wheels of energy, and they are the palate wheel of energy (*tālu-cakra*), spatial wheel of energy (*ākāśa-cakra*) and the liberative wheel of energy (*nirvāṇa-cakra*).[16] The palate wheel of energy, which is located at the root of the palate, is considered as the tenth door. Upon opening this door, the Yogī attains complete freedom from hunger and thirst. The spatial wheel of energy, while representing space, is the symbol of unimpeded freedom that is realised upon the destruction of the fetters of conditioned existence. In the *Śiva-saṃhitā* (5.151-57) this wheel is linked to the mystical mountain called Kailāsa, which is the abode of Śiva. Insofar as the liberative wheel of energy is concerned, it bestows complete liberation upon the Yogī, and is located in the thousand-petalled wheel of energy. The very name of the wheel indicates its function, which is that of freeing the Yogī from the conditioned existence.

The various esoteric texts, upon analysis, show a discrepancy concerning the number of the wheels of energy. This is so because of the esoteric nature of the wheels. What the wheels are in themselves, how they function and what their number is, is accessible only to those Yogīs that are considered perfect or proficient (*siddha*) in the secrets of Yoga.[17] The concern for the number of wheels has its source in the kind of experience different Yogis may have had. Whatever be their actual number, the fact that their existence is not denied confirms their actual existence. Literally and practically, these wheels of energy are made use of for enhancing medi-tative visualisation, so that the Yogī may experience that which each wheel of energy is supposed to represent.

The Body as the Microcosm

The outer frame of the body, which consists of matter, is not the only form of the body. According to the general Tantric view, there are a number of layers that are constitutive of the body—these layers are invisible to the eye. The origin of this view can be traced in the Upaniṣads where it is proclaimed that the body consists of five layers (*pañāca-kośa*). Corres-

ponding to this Upaniṣadic view is the Tantric view that asserts that the body consists of five coverings (*pañca-kañcuka*). The classification of these layers or coverings has been made in accrodance with the nature of the layer. If a covering is of gross nature, it belongs to the outer frame of the body, which is known as the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*). Similarly if the layer is of subtle nature, it pertains to the subtle aspect of the body, also known as the subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*). This hierarchical classification of the body into the gross body and the subtle body forms the background of Tantric thinking with regard to the nature of the body. The gross body, as an analogue of the subtle body, is structured upon the model of the latter. This analogy of the two bodies is used as a medium of explanation for establishing correspondence between the subtle body and the cosmos. As the gross body, although an imperfect one, is the representation of the subtle body, so the subtle body accordingly is seen as the microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic cosmos. The concept of correspondence, when analysed, tells us that there is no difference between the microcosm and the macrocosm. The purpose of this correspondence is to establish the unity of Being.[18] For a Haṭhayogī, thus, the so-called body is but an epitome of Supreme Being (Paramaśiva).

In the first chapter of the *Śiva-saṃhitā* are analysed the various elements and their powers that are constitutive of the cosmos. The idea of cosmos as being non-different from the microcosm, which is the body, is further analysed in this text. It is asserted that what is constitutive of the macrocosm is to be found in the microcosm, which in theological terms means that this body is nothing but the self-manifestation of Śiva. In the language of the text it means that the "great cosmos" (*mahāsākāra-piṇḍa*) is actualised in the small cosmos, which is the body.

The macro-micro analogy is used by the system of Haṭhayoga to explain its view concerning the nature of the Absolute. If the cosmos and its entities are one, it means that the cosmos itself must be identical with its ultimate source, which is Śiva itself. In the *Nirvāṇa-tantra* this correspondence or identity is explained thus: "All that is the first is in the second. As above,

so below, or as below, so above."[19] This philosophical non-dualism of Haṭhayoga differs from the non-dualism of Advaita Vedānta on some essential points. The Absolute of Vedānta is passive, and it is in and through *māyā* that the project of manifestation is realised. Since the world is a projection of an illusory power, so it cannot be real. Its existence is as real as is the existence of dreams. In its exetrme form this view of the world as unreal gave birth to the theory of non-origination, which says that the emergence of the world has never occurred. Thus the Vedānta considers every objective entity as being unreal. The system of Haṭhayoga, however, does not agree with the Vedānta concerning the falsity of the world. The Absolute of Haṭhayoga is not simply light, but also is self-reflecting thought. It is on account of its innate dynamism that the Absolute literally transforms itself into the universe. If this is the case, then the world has to be real and not like a dream object. In this manner the reality of the world is safeguarded.

This view concerning the origin of the world made it easy for the system of Haṭhayoga to think of the body not only as an abode of the divine, but also as being identical with the Absolute. This view of the body as being the emanation of the Absolute led naturally towards a reverential attitude towards the body. The aim of a Haṭhayogī thus is to attain such a state of the body that existed prior to its manifestation, which is that of non-death. All the methods of Haṭhayoga are so devised as to enable the Yogī to achieve the condition of non-death through transubstantiation of the body. It is this search for immortality of the body that made Haṭhayoga subservient to the occult practices, which are mainly derived from the various Tantric and alchemical traditions.

The Body as a Means of Liberation

While reviewing the various methods and theories concerning liberation that were current at the time of the emergence of Haṭhayoga, the *Śiva-saṃhitā* (1.4, 14, 15) rejects them all on account of them being inconsequential. The text considers the system of Yoga as the most ennobling method for reaching the state of liberation by asserting that the "Yoga Śāstra has

been found to be the only true and firm doctrine." To the exclusion of all other ways of liberation, the method of Yoga is considered the best, which means that there is no need for "any other doctrine" (ibid., 5.1). It is through the methods of Yoga that an intuitive gnosis (*jñāna*) is attained, and thereby the Yogī is enabled to make a distinction between the real and the unreal (ibid., 1.57-58; 2.54). Upon the attainment of intuitive knowledge, the Yogī gains complete freedom from the karman-effects. The body plays the most important role in the attainment of this soteric knowledge, as without the body no practice is possible. Thus we are told: "When this body, obtained through karman, is made the means of obtaining *nirvāṇa*, then only the carrying of the burden of the body becomes fruitful, not otherwise" (ibid., 2.49).

The classical Yoga of Patañjali disfavours this interpretation of the body. For Patañjali human existence will remain conditioned to the extent the Self (*puruṣa*) associates itself with Nature (*prakṛti*). Real liberation for the Self from Nature is that of "isolation" (*kaivalya*). The system of Haṭhayoga, however, thinks otherwise. For it the attainment of liberation is not the result of dissociation of the Self from Nature: rather it is through the transformation of the body into a divine entity that the soteriological goal of liberation is attained.

The body is transformed into a suitable instrument for the attainment of liberation when, in the furnace of yogic praxis, it is enabled to overcome the limitations of materiality. In practical terms it means that a Yogī, prior to anything else, is asked to gain mastery over the elements of Nature. It is through the yogic practice of concentrative unity (*saṃyama*)[20] that a Yogī gains mental control over the elements. Accomplishment in the method of concentrative unity is dependent to what extent a Yogī makes use of his will. It is in accordance with the content of will that a Yogī is empowered to gain such powers as would terminate in the mastery over the elements of Nature (cf. *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 3.44).

The Haṭhayoga also has its own specific techniques, in comparison to the techniques of concentrative meditation of classical Yoga, of five *dhāraṇā*-s or abstractions, and they are of earth, of water, fire, air and ether. The technique of ab-

straction consists of in introverting the senses, so that their rupture with the outside world is perfected. Once intorversion is perfected, the Yogī accordingly gains ontrol over the elements. The control over the elements, in other words, is dependent to what degree link between the senses and their respective fields is sundered. As a result of this withdrawal of the senses from their respective fields is given rise to such occult powers as would enable the Yogī to travel invisibly in space or be simultaneously present at different places, etc.

The mastery over the elements is viewed as a prelude to ultimate liberation. The reasoning that is offered is the following. As the body is composed of the same elements of which the universe is, so it is necessary, if the body is to be refined and thereby divinised, that perfect mastery over the elements be gained. In mastering the elements, a Yogī thereby masters his own body, which only generates karman-fields, and the generation of karman-fields results in the emergence of the cycle of rebirth. No more does the conditioned existence trouble the Yogī once he overcomes the very forces that are responsible in generating embodied existents.

Further, the mastery over the elements for a Haṭhayogī means that there occurs simultaneously dissolution of the objective world. The process of dissolution begins from the element earth and ends up with the element ether: one element dissolving itself into the other till the last element of ether is reached (ibid., 1.78). This dissolving of elements into each other occurs within the Yogī in terms of introversion. This cosmic dissolution of elements is expressed in the *Śiva-saṃhitā* (3.78) thus: "Having conquered all the elements and being void of all hopes and worldly connections . . . the mind of the Yogī becomes dead and he obtains the spiritual power (*siddhi*) called *khecarī*." The state of *khecarī* is equated to unlimited space, and so denotes ultimate freedom from the structures of temporality. It is this immortal state of *khecarī* for which a Haṭhayogī hankers.

It is the belief of Tāntrikas that the Supreme Being, Paramaśiva, is characterised by two movements, which are the movements of expansion and of dissolution. It is through the movement of expansion or emission that the Supreme Being

externalises its energy as this universe, whereas through the movement of dissolution the manifest categories are withdrawn to their unmanifest condition. When externalising its energy, the Supreme Being thereby reduces itself to the status or condition of limited and unfree categories. Thus the manifest condition of the Supreme Being denotes the state of bondage, and so is considered to be antithetical to the condition that liberation dentoes. In manifest condition the Supreme Being, as it were, suffers from division, differentiation, and thereby from bondage. It is to overcome this manifest condition of bondage that a Haṭhayogī makes use of such techniques that would initiate the movement of withdrawal, and in terms of which the primal unity of Being is experienced.

The most important method that is employed for initiating the process of withdrawal or dissolution of the manifest categories is that of the arousal of locked up energy, called *kuṇḍalinī*, at the base of the rectum. The method that is employed for this purpose is that of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*). Through this technique are unified the two breaths that we inhale and exhale. Upon their unification, the unified breaths are pushed into mystical channel called *suṣumṇā*. It is through this channel that the unified breaths reach the place where the locked up energy lies in the state of dormancy—and the place is known as the *mūlādhāra-cakra*. Upon the arousal of the locked up energy, it is made to ascend by piercing the various wheels of energy that are located along the spinal cord. On reaching the crown of the head, which is known as the *sahasrāra-cakra*, and which also is the abode of Śiva, the locked up energy merges into Śiva, and as a result of this merger is given rise to soteric liberation, which for a Haṭhayogī denotes the experience of bliss. The experience of bliss for a Haṭhayogī also means that he no more experiences any kind of differentiation of empirical consciousness, but sinks into a state of consciousness that is of the nature of sameness of Being.

Most of the philosophical ideas of the system of Haṭhayoga are mainly derived from Tantricism. The emergence of Tantricism must be seen as a reaction against such traditions that had a negative orientation concerning the world. The aim of renunciatory spirituality is not different from the one

that affirmative spirituality proclaims—and the aim is to gain liberation from the conditioned existence. The two methods, however, differ in their attitudes concerning as to how this goal of liberation is to be reached. The way of renunciation would like to withdraw from the world of matter, whereas the way of affirmation makes use of matter. It is the attitudinal context that has determined the philosophical outlook of both the traditions. Haṭhayoga, while having chosen the way of affirmation, thinks it necessary that a proper attention needs to be paid to the role of the body in the over-all scheme of spirituality. It is for this reason that it developed specific methods for the enhancement of the culture of the body.

References

1. Insofar as the origin of Haṭhayoga is concerned, it is very obscure and is buried under the layers of floklore, legend and myth. It probably arose between the eighth and the ninth centuries AD when the Siddhas were propagating the doctrine of the culture of the body (*kāya-sādhanā*). It was, however, Gorakhanātha or Gorakṣa who is supposed to have given the finishing touches to the system of Haṭhayoga. It is Gorakhanātha (twelfth entury?) who is believed to have written the most definitive texts on the system of Haṭhayoga. Some of the texts that he wrote are the *Gorakṣa-saṃhitā* and the *Haṭhayoga*. It is only the former text that is at present available. In addition to the texts of Gorakhanātha, there are various other texts that propound the philosophy and praxis of Haṭhayoga. The most important ones among them are the *Śiva-saṃhitā*, *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā* of certain Gheraṇḍa of Bengal, *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* of Svātmārāma (fifteenth century), and the *Yogacūḍāmaṇi Upaniṣad*.

   Insofar as the meaning of the term *haṭha* is concerned, it is a compound of *ha* and *ṭha*. When combined together, the term means either force or exertion. The term however has been given an esoteric interpretation when *ha* and *ṭha* have been equated to such symbols as the Sun and the Moon. This esoteric interpretation is determined by the Tantric ideology that looks at the body as the container of bi-polar energy or life-force. The life-force that is represented by *ha* is said to be located in the region of the heart, whereas the life-force that *ṭha* represents is

said to be in the area of spinal base. The bi-polar energy as breaths constitute inhalation (*prāṇa*) and exhalation (*apāna*).

2. The Haṭhayogīs are of the view that it is the bi-polar energy of inhalation and exhalation that sustains the body. In order to make the body a fit instrument for higher purposes, it is necessary to gain control over the bi-polar currents of energy. It is believed that the mind becomes peaceful when a Yogī succeeds in controlling the currents of energy. It is through the practice of breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) that total control over the two currents, inhalation and exhalation, is achieved.

In order to gain control over the two currents of energy, and thereby transform the body into a suitable instrument for the attainment of soteric liberation, certain preliminary steps have to be taken up, and they consist of certain internal purificatory (*śodhana*) exercises. These purificatory exercises are the following: *dhautī, vasti, neti, naulī, trāṭaka*, and *kapāla bhaṭi*. These purificatory techniques are also known as the six acts (*ṣaṭ-karman*), (see *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*).

Dhautī is simply an exercise of cleansing. It has many divisions. It consists of both the internal and external purifications like the cleansing of rectum, of teeth, of throat, etc. The internal purification is performed either by making use of water (*varisāra*) or of air (*vaṭasāra*). The most important aspect of this purification is that of *dhautī-karma*, which consists of in swallowing a piece of fabric and which is left for sometime in the stomach. The aim of the method is to cleanse the stomach from impurities (see Theos Bernad, *Haṭhayoga*, New York, 1944). The second method is that of *vasti*. It is a method that is mainly used for cleansing the rectum and the large intestines by pumping water through anus. The cleansing is of two kinds: liquid (*jala*) or dry (*śuṣka*).

The third technique is called *neti*. It is used for cleansing the nasal cavities by inserting a thin piece of thread into the nostrils and by moving the thread to and fro.

The fourth technique is that of *naulī*, which is very complex and is used for moving the muscles in the abdomen. The fifth method is that of *trāṭaka*. It is a technique of meditation, in that the eyes are fixed upon an object till the time tears begin to gush out from the eye-sockets. As far as the method of *kapala-bhaṭi* is concerned, it is a method in which water is sucked through the nostrils and is thrown out through the mouth.

All the above six exercises are physical in nature, and th aim of them is to effect purification of the body. There are also methods that are purely mental in nature (cf. *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*,

5.36 ff.). In addition to these methods, Hathayoga also makes use of such postures that would be functional both at physical and mental levels, and so are closely related to the "symbolic bodily getures (*mudrā*)." According to the *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*, there are such thirty-two postures (*āsana*-s) that are considered suitable for a candidate of Yoga. Insofar as the mumber of locks (*bandha*) is concened, they are said to be twenty-five in number.

Upon gaining proficiency in the above techniques, the aspirant accordingly begins the practice of breath-control. The practice of breath-control is the heart of Haṭhayoga. The mind remains in the state of rest between the time gap of inhalation and exhalation. To achieve the state of perfect rest, a Yogī is asked to prolong the period of retention of breath (*kumbhaka*), because in doing so abstract absorption is deepened. The meditative absorption is of three kinds, namely, gross meditation (*sthūla dhyāna*), meditation of the nature of light (*joytir dhyāna*), and subtle meditation (*sūkṣma-dhyāna*).

The aim of these exercises is to make the body perfect and disease free. The hallmark of a perfect body is that a Yogī is so empowered as to shed away the outer frame as and when he wills. The *Yogaśikhā Upaniṣad* (1.40-42) has described the character of a perfect thus: "Gradually withdrawing from the great elements and their potentials (*tanmātra*), the body composed of the seven humours is progressively consumed by the fire of Yoga. Even the gods cannot perceive this powerful yogic body, which is exempt from modification and bondage and possesses various supreme powers. The body (of the Yogī) is like the ether, even pure than the ether and is seen to be subtler than the subtle, coarse yet not coarse, yet not sentient."

As the Haṭhayogic praxis is specifically Tantric in orientation, so it is but natural for it to seek the arousal of the locked up energy, *kuṇḍalinī*, by moving her upward to the crown of the head. This dormant energy is moved through the gracious vein, and on her upward journey she pierces the six mystical wheels of energy (*ṣaṭ-cakra-bheda*), which are located along the spinal cord. The locked up energy is such an unlimited power within the body as would enable the Yogī, upon its arousal, to negate sequential process of time (cf. *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, 3.120). When the *kuṇḍalinī* merges in the static transcendental light (Śiva) at the crown of the head (*sahasrāra-cakra*), there is a blissful experience of immense magnitude. The bliss that a Haṭhayogī experiences differs from the bliss that is experienced by a non-Tantric Yogī. John Woodroffe, in this context, makes the following observation. "The *dhyāna-yogin* should not

neglect his body, knowing that, as he is both mind and matter, each reacts the one upon the other. Naglect or mere mortification of the body is more apt to produce disordered imagination than a true spiritual experience. He is concerned, however, with the body in the sense a *haṭhayogin* is. It is possible to be a successful *dhyāna-yogin* and yet to be weak in body. . . . His body, and not he himself, determines when he shall die. When he is in *samādhi, kuṇḍalinī śakti* is still sleeping in the *mūlādhāra*, and none of the physical symptoms, physical bliss or power (*siddhi*) . . . are observed in his case." *The Serpent Power*, London, 1919, pp. 266-67.

3. *Taittirīya-saṃhitā*, 5.1.5; 6.4.2; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 11.1.6; *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 3.19.
4. *Mahābhārata*, Śāntiparvan, 12.204.11.
5. The term *kānphaṭa* is a compound of *kān* and *phaṭa*, meaning an ear that is split. The followers of Gorakhanātha are also called as Kānphaṭa Yogīs because, at the time of initiation, their ear is silted with a razor. Once silted, earrings of baked or unbaked clay or of some other material are inserted into the holes of the ear. It is on account of this distinctive mark that the Haṭhayogīs have also been known as Kānphaṭa Yogīs.
6. *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, trans. Pancham Sinh, New Delhi, 1975. It is a text on Haṭhayoga with a Tantric perspective.
7. A.K. Banerjea, *Philosophy of Gorakhanatha*, Gorakhpur, 1961, pp. 75 ff.
8. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton, 1989, p. 227.
9. A.K. Banerjea, op. cit., p. 139.
10. See *Śiva-saṃhitā*, 2, for the description of mystical veins.
11. The ten winds are the *prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna, vyāna, nāga, kūrma, kiṅkarā, devadatta*, and *dhanañjaya*. See for further information concerning the wind, A.K. Banerjea, op. cit., p. 162.
12. See G.W. Briggs, *Gorakhanātha and Kānphaṭa Yogis*, Delhi, 1973.
13. The three coils of the *kuṇḍalinī* express the three innate dispositions, and they are the peaceful (*sattva*), the passionate (*rajas*) and the depressing (*tamas*). While lying dormant with a tail in her mouth, the *kuṇḍalinī* as snake is shown as having an intense urge for returning to her primal state that pravailed prior to the actualisation of the manifest categories, and the primal state is characterised by the absolute unity of Being. See *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, 3.97 f.; *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*, 3.49.
14. The term *anāhata* means the sound that exists prior to striking. This inaudible sound exists in the Absolute prior to the manifestation of the categories of existence. Upon the emanation

of the sound comes into being this entire manifest realm along with language or spoken speech. The words, thus, we speak have their source in the Absolute itself—and it is from this sound that mantra too emanates. What it means is this: The manifest realm is nothing else but the manifest condition of the Word (*vāc*). See John Woodroffe, *The Sperpent Power*, Madras, 1931, pp. 377 f.

15. A.K. Banrjea, op. cit., pp. 179 ff.
16. John Woodroffe, op. cit., p. 317.
17. Jean Varenne, *Yoga and Hindu Tradition*, London,1976, pp. 154 f.
18. John Woodroffe, *Introduction to Tantra Śāstra*, Madras, 1973, p. 35.
19. The term *saṃyama* means, "to hold together." The last three steps in the classical Yoga of Patañjali, when held together, go under this nomenclature. The steps are of those of *dhāraṇā* (absorption), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (enstasy). Cf. *Yogasūtra*, 2.19, 29, 43; 3.43.
20. *Gheraṇḍa-saṃhitā*, 3.68-81; Theos Bernard, *Haṭhayoga*, London, 1982, pp. 91 f.; Mircea Eliade, op. cit., pp. 125 ff.

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Moti Lal Pandit, trained as a theologian and linguist, has been communicator of Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. His many books include: *Towards Transcendence; Being as Becoming; Transcendence and Negation; Beyond the Word; Trika Śaivism of Kashmir; Śūnyatā: The Essence of Mahāyāna Spirituality; Buddhism: A Religion of Salvation;* and *Encounter with Buddhism.*

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi
Website: www.mrmlbooks.com

ISBN 81-215-1172-0
9788121511728

Rs 650